



Remembering Girouard Avenue

By

Stephen Morrissey

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Cover photo: 2226 Girouard Avenue is the upper flat in the photo, entered by the door on the right. Photo taken around 1998-1999 by the author.

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Is not anyone who has lived a life and left a record
of that life, worthy of biography—the failures as well
as the successes, the humble as well as the illustrious.

—Virginia Woolf

No place where I have lived has left as much of an impression on me as my grandmother's flat on Girouard Avenue. I was the youngest of my grandmother's grandchildren, I was the last in line, and this gave me a sense of things ending, not beginning. It is not an exaggeration to say that it gave me a sense of the transience of life, that nothing is permanent, and I have lived with this awareness my whole life. With this was a consciousness of old age and death, and a need to remember and record what happened in the past. This may seem gloomy to some; however, this has helped make my life what it is, with a great sense of the importance of our ancestors, our family's history, and time.

As a child I often visited my grandmother at her Girouard Avenue flat. I also attended many funerals, beginning with my father's funeral in 1956, then the funerals of aunts and uncles, my grandmother's funeral in 1965, and my step-father's funeral in 1969. How different the outlook on life is for children who have young parents, young aunts and uncles, cousins who are their own age, and grandparents who are only in their 50s or 60s. They must inhabit a world of hopefulness, potential, and assumed success, a world with a future and not with looking back to the past.

It is no wonder that for me the Girouard Avenue flat is a place of memories and dreams—a kind of psychic center—for it was a place where so many things happened in our family. For some of us, it was the place of our beginning; for myself, it was a place of ending but also one of happiness. The central figure in this narrative is my grandmother, Edith Sweeney Morrissey, someone for whom I have only love, respect, and happy memories.

To begin, it might be interesting to know something of my grandmother's family history. Edith Sweeney's mother, Margaret Flanagan (1851-1926), was the daughter of Mary Barron and Murtagh Flanagan. Mary Barron (Edith's grandmother) was buried at Notre Dame des Neiges Cemetery on 26 June 1906 and was predeceased by her husband, Murtagh Flanagan; I don't know where Murtagh is buried. Murtagh Flanagan and Mary Barron (Edith's maternal grandparents) had at least four children. There was Margaret Flanagan, Edith's mother, and William E. Flanagan, Edith's uncle, who was a witness at Edith's wedding to Martin Morrissey in 1895; William E. Flanagan died on 10 December 1927. A third child was Edith's aunt, Elizabeth Flanagan ("Aunt Lib"). She died on 3 January 1944 and is buried with her mother next to the Morrissey family plot at Notre Dame des Neiges Cemetery. Finally, there is Ann Mary Barron Flanagan, who was buried on 20 October 1950. She married Joseph William Dowling on 29 October 1890. The Sweeneys and the Barrons were very close, so much so that Edith considered the name Barron as one of my father's middle names, something my father recounted with some humour years later.

While the Barrons were Roman Catholics, the Flanagans and the Sweeneys were Protestants. Edith's parents, James Sweeney and Margaret Flanagan, were married on 7 July 1875 at Erskine Presbyterian Church in Montreal. Edith Sweeney's father, James Sweeney, was the son of Mary Gallagher and Daniel Sweeney. At James and Margaret's wedding, Edith's grandfather Daniel Sweeney, the "father of the groom", signed the marriage certificate as a

witness. Margaret Flanagan was of the "age of majority" which at that time was twenty-five years of age.

Daniel Sweeney was born in Ireland in 1816; he died of "cerebral apoplexy" and was buried at Mount Royal Cemetery on 8 February 1888, age 72 years. At that time he resided at 153½ St. Charles Borromée Street in Montreal (the "1/2" possibly refers to the upper unit). Daniel worked as a tailor in 1845 when, according to *Lovell's Directory*, the family lived at "Ste Catherine and Bleury". In *Lovell's* 1861-1862 edition he was still working as a tailor but the family had moved to 22 Hermine Street, Montreal, which is about a block south of St. Patrick's Church; in 1868 the family lived at 107 St. George Street. Daniel's wife, Mary Gallagher, was born in Ireland in 1814 and died of "consumption" (tuberculosis) on 14 December 1860 at age 46.

James Sweeney, Edith Sweeney's father, lived his final years with Edith at 2226 Girouard Avenue. James was born in 1852 in Montreal; he died when he was 85 years old of "uremia coma and chronic nephritis" (kidney disease) on 11 January 1937. In 1864-1865 he and his family lived on Tannery West in Griffintown and he worked as a labourer; in his later years he worked in a tobacco store. He is listed as the owner of the Sweeney family plot at Mount Royal Cemetery.

James Sweeney's wife, Margaret Flanagan, was born around 1851-1854 in St. John's (present day St. Jean-sur-Richelieu), Quebec, about thirty miles south-east of Montreal. Margaret was baptized at the Anglican church in St. John's and, like her husband, was a Reformed Presbyterian. I visited this church in St-Jean around 2005; even though the English-speaking population had almost disappeared the church still had a small congregation and at that time still held Sunday services.

Margaret Flanagan's mother, Mary Barron, was Roman Catholic and this might account for why several of James Sweeney and Margaret Flanagan's children were baptized at the Roman Catholic La Cathédrale in Montreal; La Cathédrale is Notre Dame Church which used to issue baptismal and death certificates in the name of St. Patrick's Church until St. Patrick's achieved economic independence by paying off debts incurred by construction of the church building; both churches were owned by the Sulpician Order. Margaret, Edith's mother, died of "pernicious anemia" at age 72 years on 4 January 1926 and was buried on 6 January 1926 at Mount Royal Cemetery.

According to the 1881 census, Margaret Flanagan and James Sweeney lived in the St. Louis Ward, Montreal, where James was employed as a book keeper. By then Margaret and James had three children: Edith Mary (my grandmother) who was born in Montreal on 25 May 1875; Clara, born 7 March 1878; and their first son, Frederick who was born on 18 March 1880; other children were born later. The former are all listed as being Reformed Presbyterians. Also living with them was Margaret's mother, Mary (Barron) Flanagan (born 1829); that she was living with her daughter's family suggests that her husband Murtagh Flanagan was already deceased by 1881. Also living with there were two of Margaret's siblings, William Flanagan (born 1874) and Marianne (Ann Mary) Flanagan (born 1859), who were Roman Catholics. If James was the sole breadwinner, he was supporting two families.

Fifty-five years later, in 1936, we find several generations of the family domiciled together at the Girouard Avenue flat. There was Edith, her daughter Mabel, her sons Herb and Edgar, Edith's father James Sweeney, and possibly Edith's Aunt Lib (Elizabeth Ryan). Edith's younger sister, my Great Auntie Essie (Ethel Sweeney, born 23 May 1885) may have also been living at 2226 Girouard assuming she moved there with her father, James Sweeney; Auntie Essie was definitely domiciled there by 1946 as that is her address as listed in that year's *Lovell's*

Montreal City Directory. In the early 1960s, after the death of her husband, Bertram ("Bert") Taylor, Edith's youngest sister Edna Sweeney Taylor (born 1892) shared Essie's bedroom with her. As well, Edith's sister Clara Sweeney may have been living at the Girouard flat in the 1930s, she died in 1939.

Great Auntie Essie made a lasting impression on me, all of these years later I still remember her with fondness. She would move her fingers across her lips, "zipping her lips", and then gesture that she was throwing away the key to indicate that she wouldn't repeat something that was said, that she could keep a secret. It occurs to me now that this was a way of avoiding referring to the fact that she was terribly deaf, I remember the wires connected to her hearing aid. After reading about the working conditions women endured while working in factories in Montreal's garment industry, it is likely that the constant noise of machinery helped cause Auntie Essie's deafness. She also had a mannerism of drinking tea with her little finger extended out away from the cup, rather upper class don't you know! Or sipping hot tea from the saucer, rather lower class! or her use of mustard packs when she had a chest cold which seemed to occur fairly often. Now I know that respiratory illness was common in that side of the family and I understand Essie a bit better. I still have a birthday card from Auntie Essie, in her squiggly old person's handwriting, addressed to "Master Stephen Morrissey".

One evening when I was about six years old I was staying overnight at my grandmother's home; Grandma, Auntie Essie, and I were in the kitchen at the rear of the flat. It must have been fall or winter because it was already dark outside and we were about to eat supper; a single light bulb with a shade hung over the kitchen table. There was a khaki military knapsack hanging beside the window in the kitchen pantry, who could this have belonged to?

I remember lying on the floor by the entrance to the kitchen near the kitchen table and trying to look up Auntie Essie's dress; had someone said she had holes in her underwear? Or was I already playing on the floor and out of curiosity decided that this might be something to do? I seem to remember seeing Essie's baggy drawers (but no holes in them) and I doubt anyone knew my real intention in lying on the floor when Essie passed by. A few minutes later, sitting at the kitchen table, I can still visualize my grandmother cutting a pork chop I was to have for supper into small pieces; I remember the meal very well, it was pork chops, fried potatoes, and mashed turnip.

I am curious about what people used to eat. For instance, my Uncle Herb would dip bread in the grease when they had sausages, something he said he learned at home. I also remember on some Saturdays my mother cooking me a steak for lunch and toasting a piece of crusty bread in the grease from the steak just fried in the black cast-iron frying pan. It was really delicious! As a side dish we would sometimes have heated canned tomatoes with white bread mixed into it. Or a piece of bread with a banana on it and brown sugar sprinkled on it. I still love mashed turnip and mashed potato heated the next day in a frying pan, the brown crust especially delicious. Tea and toast seemed a staple in the diet of old people.

I remember visiting Girouard another time and when we were leaving being hugged by my grandmother; I asked what these "bulges" were, referring to her breasts, and the silence that followed. That was a wonderful and loving hug that my grandmother gave me! I still remember it and the memory of it and of other loving gestures that are sustaining to this day.

Over the years many people lived at Edith's home. Indeed, for several years my parents, my brother, and I also lived at 2226 Girouard Avenue. Just after my parents married in March 1940 they lived in a three and a half room apartment in a newly constructed building on Avonmore Avenue (not far from Girouard); a "three and a half" room apartment is one bedroom,

a living room, a kitchen, and a bathroom (that's the "half" room). The Avonmore apartment was located near streetcar tracks that were eventually removed in the late 1950s; one day someone was hit by a street car and my father told my mother to stay in-doors and avoid the accident scene. Another time a man followed my mother home and she phoned her father, who was a fire man and pretty tough, and he told her to lock the door; the police soon arrived as he had phoned them to go to the apartment. My brother, John, was born in 1946 and the Avonmore apartment was still large enough for a family of three, but a few months after I was born in 1950 it became necessary to move.

This reminds me that between my brother's birth in 1946 and my birth in 1950 my mother was pregnant and had a miscarriage. When she went to the hospital she was questioned as to whether the miscarriage was in some way induced. They thought she had caused the loss of her baby, but she hadn't. Life would have been somewhat different if I had two older siblings, one possibly a girl; or, perhaps, I would not have been born, my parents would have stopped at two children.

I remember a spare room off the kitchen, located at the rear of the Girouard flat. This was my grandmother's father's, James Sweeney's, bedroom in his old age. James worked as a tobacconist and at some time after his wife's death in 1926 he moved to 2226 Girouard Avenue to live with his daughter, Edith, and her family. I remember the room that been his bedroom very well. It was fairly small and inside the room a door on the right led to the stairs to the basement; when I was a child there was a chest of drawers to the left as you entered the room and on the floor, between the legs of the bureau, was a red carton of six bottles of Coca Cola. It was small but cosy, the kind of room in which I would be happy to sleep. Located at the rear of the flat it would have been out of the way and therefore quiet, but he would never have been lonely living with his daughter and her family.

It is curious to me how some memories assume an importance that seems exaggerated even to the one who remembers them. Have I, in parts of this narrative, conflated a number of memories into one fictional memory? Why is it that seeing a carton of Coca Cola should have impressed itself on me? But it seems to me that seeing this carton of Coca Cola was also the night that I remember eating supper at my grandmother's home. I have always been concerned with remembering the past and that is one reason I began keeping a diary in January 1965; even at age fourteen I felt that remembering the past was important for me.

Our move to 2226 Girouard Avenue from Avonmore was on the advice of my father's doctor—apartments were difficult to find after World War Two as there was a postwar housing shortage; if you could find a place to rent you still had to pay the landlord a nonrefundable "tax" for the key. We moved to my grandmother's flat in the fall of 1950 when I was around six or seven months old; we lived there to around 1953 or 1954 when we moved a few doors from my Uncle Herb and Auntie Dorothy's flat at 4596 Oxford Avenue. My aunt and uncle lived in one of John Hoolahan's flats—these four-plexes were constructed by John Hoolahan on Oxford Avenue and Harvard Avenue, in the Notre Dame de Grâce neighbourhood of Montreal, between Monkland and Terrebonne in the 1920s—and thanks to Uncle Herb's connection with the Hoolahans we moved to 4614 Oxford Avenue. What a luxurious flat it turned out to be!

I know Auntie Mabel was sometimes annoyed by our presence at Girouard, she didn't seem to like my mother and at times expressed it in comments she made so that my mother could hear them. Perhaps she didn't like that we weren't Catholics although neither was her own mother, my grandmother; Edith converted to Catholicism to marry Martin Morrissey but she was never a practicing Catholic. Edith said nothing to any of us that might have shown that she

disliked having us there. Edith's home was always open to family and this generosity and love of family is one of the important things I remember about her.

There was a routine to daily life at Edith's home. On Friday's Edith ordered groceries by phone from a grocery store on Sherbrooke Street West; my mother remembers Edith saying "All you need is money" after placing her order. My mother was always an industrious person, someone who rolled up her sleeves and would paint walls or strip varnish from hard wood doors, and this is what she did at Girouard. When Edith or Mabel walked through a room, if there was a bit of lint or paper on the carpet, they'd bend over to pick it up; otherwise, they'd run a carpet sweeper, a Bissell, across the carpets.

In the early 1950s there were two small children (my brother and I), my parents, Mabel, Edith, and Essie all living under the same roof. John, my older brother, remembers it being quite crowded and he never regretted leaving Girouard. Even as a child he felt that Mabel didn't like him, and he also thought it was because we were not Catholics and because Mabel did not like our mother. Grandma Morrissey, he says, was always nice to him. Years later, when he was a student at McGill University, she encouraged him to continue with his studies. My mother suffered from Mabel's unpleasant complaints, for most of her life my mother would have upset stomachs from her nerves and Mabel was stressful to live with, the stress resulting in stomach aches.

It must have irritated Auntie Mabel that John jumped on the furniture in the living-room, it was a game in which he avoided walking on the floor by jumping from one piece of furniture to the next and then along the fireplace mantel to the next piece of furniture. I remember my mother telling me about this. Perhaps this is partly why the springs of the maroon couch, always covered with white sheets, sagged to the floor. Or the couch was just plain old.

I don't remember any family member mentioning to me either our Irish ancestry or the Catholic Church. Once, my brother told me that we wouldn't find much in Ireland that relates to our family. I found this to be true when in 1978 I visited Ireland and met some people from Boston who could speak Irish and were making a pilgrimage to religious sites; I had no family to visit in Ireland and I did not share their enthusiasm for the Catholic church and everything Irish. Most people, including several cousins who have visited Ireland, have wonderful and memorable experiences; while I was there it rained relentlessly and I was terribly lonely. My days of travel are probably over so I see little possibility of my ever returning as a tourist to Ireland. My enthusiasm for that country lies mainly in the music of Van Morrison and The Chieftains, the poetry of W.B. Yeats and Patrick Kavanaugh, and to anything pertaining to our family's history.

EDITH SWEENEY AND MARTIN MORRISSEY

Edith Mary Sweeney married John Martin Morrissey, a son of Thomas Morrissey and Mary Callaghan, on 15 May 1895 at St. Anthony's Church on St. Antoine Street in St. Henry which was at that time a separate municipality from Montreal; the church was demolished in the early 1970s to make way for the Ville Marie Expressway. On St. Antoine Street, a few blocks east of Atwater, there is today a much smaller storefront St. Anthony's Church in which the baptismal font from the old church can be seen through the front window.

Martin's mother, Mary Callaghan, was born in Newfoundland on 1 March 1845 and a few years later the family settled in Montreal. Mary's father, John Callaghan, was born in 1821 in Kells, Co. Kilkenney, Ireland; he died on 27 April 1905. John Callaghan's wife, Bridget Phelan,

was also born in Ireland, around 1822, and died in Montreal on 20 February 1890. Three of their sons, Mary's brothers, became very prominent Catholic priests in Montreal and Mary's son, Martin, was named after one of these priests, his uncle Father Martin Callaghan.

As an aside that might be interesting, Martin's grandfathers, Laurence Morrissey and John Callaghan, were friends from the 1840s. The two families were joined together when children from the two families, Thomas Morrissey and Mary Callaghan, married on 20 November 1867 at St. Patrick's Church. Thomas was twenty-four years old, Mary was twenty-two years old. The friendship of Laurence Morrissey and John Callaghan is curious because Laurence seems uninterested in religion while John was very much involved in the Catholic Church. I don't see much evidence that the Morrisseys were ever very religious; the only "spirits" some of us were involved with were of the beverage variety.

When they married Edith was almost twenty years old, Martin was almost twenty-one years old. Martin was born on 14 June 1874 in Montreal. A "J.M. Morrissey", I believe my grandfather, was a member of the Knights of Pythias, Standard Legion No. 5, in 1894-1895; his position was that of "inside sentinel", meeting in the evenings at Glenora Hall, 1886 rue Notre Dame. Martin's siblings are: Mary Ann, Michael, Margaret, John, Johannah, Bridget, Laurence Thomas, James Joseph, James Leo, Luke, and Thomas Patrick. Edith's siblings are Clara, Frank, Frederick James, William Edward, Essie, Bertha, Herbert, and Edna; I knew Edith, Essie, and Edna.

I don't know what became of Martin's brothers but several of his sisters were close to Edith and Martin's family. One of Martin's brothers is Laurence Thomas (or possibly "Thomas Laurence") Morrissey. Lawrence Thomas Morrissey (named after his grandfather Laurence and his father Thomas) enlisted in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, to serve in World War One, on 22 June 1918. On his Attestation Paper it states that he was born on 28 January 1889 (on the [Morrissey Family History](#) website I have the date, perhaps incorrectly, as 1879) making him possibly twenty-nine years old at the time of enlisting depending on which birth date is accurate. Lawrence, like Martin, was short, he was only five foot seven and half inches tall; his complexion was fair; he had blue eyes and brown hair; and he was employed as a clerk.

Laurence's Attestation Papers are interesting for a number of reasons; for instance, they describe his physical appearance, but also because they are signed by Dr. E.J. Mullaly who "affirmed" that Laurence was "Fit for service abroad but not for general service" which I guess means that he was suitable to fight in the Great War but not suitable for "general service." Dr. Mullaly also interests us because he is mentioned in a handwritten letter of 18 June 1956 from Lily McCabe of Montreal to Kathleen "Tally" Morrissey of Newcastle, NB. Tally is a daughter of Charles Morrissey who was a Member of Parliament and a cousin of Martin's, she was still alive in 1998 when I began my extensive research into our family's history. Lily McCabe is a niece of Martin Morrissey and a daughter of Margaret Morrissey and granddaughter of Laurence Morrissey and Johannah Meany. In her letter to Lily, Tally must have said that she was planning a trip to Ireland; Lily McCabe wishes her well in her travels and then mentions, "This week we celebrate the Golden Wedding of Dr. & Mrs. Mullaly at which I was one of the three Brides Maids fifty years ago—and I say it without a blush."

Martin and Edith and their children did not move often or far from where they first lived as a family; they lived at the following two addresses in the working-class neighbourhood of St. Henry before moving to 2226 Girouard Avenue: from 1895 to 1907 they lived at 572 (now possibly 3072) St. Antoine Street; from 1907 to around 1926 they lived just around the corner from St. Antoine Street at 94 (now possibly 1094) Marin Avenue.

Not far from Edith and Martin's home, Edith's parents, James Sweeney and Margaret Flanagan, lived at 536 Greene Avenue, and other relatives also lived within walking distance. My uncle Alex Morrissey lived with his maternal grandparents on Greene Avenue around 1920 when my father and his brother, Herb, were quarantined at home with scarlet fever. Martin's sister, Mary Ann Morrissey, who married Alex Clapperton, lived on Hollowell Avenue, a block away. The Clappertons were good friends of Edith and Martin and for many years their daughter Eileen Oakes and her husband Andre Oakes visited the Girouard flat.

Built around 1905, 2226 Girouard Avenue is a fairly large upper flat; there is a large living room, a dining room, an entrance way or foyer that enters into the dining room, three bedrooms, a kitchen with a walk-in pantry, a spare room off the kitchen, a bathroom, storage space in the basement, and a front and back balcony. Even today we would think of the place as being quite spacious. Girouard Avenue had not been widened when the flat was constructed but when the street was widened for streetcars and other traffic the front lawns disappeared. This area of Girouard, south of Sherbrooke Street West, was populated by people who were mostly lower middle class.

My brother remembers that Girouard Avenue below Sherbrooke Street, where our grandmother's flat was located, was in a rough part of the neighbourhood compared to Oxford Avenue, only a few blocks away, where we moved around 1954. That area of Girouard and Old Orchard Avenue below Sherbrooke are remembered by my brother as not being safe: he writes, "any out of place people were spotted and set upon."

Edith and Martin had eight children: Mabel (b. 1896; d. 1960); "Victoria" (known familiarly as "Elsie" (b. 1897; d. 1911); Stella (b. around 1898; d. 1905); Frank (b. 1898; d. 1938); William (b. 1900; d. 1977); Alex (b. 1905; d. 1968); Herbert (b. 1910; d. 1998), and my father Edgar (b. 1912; d. 1956). Growing up, my father and Herb were very close to each other.

Not much can be said of Elsie and Stella, both passed away when they were young and I never heard anything mentioned about them. I know that my Auntie Mabel was grief stricken by the loss of her two sisters with whom she had been very close. Stella was born around 1898 and died or was buried on 27 August 1905 when she was about seven years old. Stella, who was a niece to the Clapperton's, was the first to be buried in the Clapperton family plot at Cote des Neiges Cemetery, it is section 6, 00897. Did my grandparents have so little money that they could not buy a grave for the family, or for Stella? I don't know, but I do know that to lose two daughters at such a young age was a terrible tragedy for the whole family. As well, the Morrisseys were now a mostly male household, the only women left were Edith and her daughter Mabel and they were close for many years as Mabel never married or left home.

The Clapperton plot was purchased by Alex Clapperton (1869-1938) who was married to my grandfather's sister Mary-Ann Morrissey. One of their children was Eileen Clapperton who married Andre Oakes. Eileen and Andre lived at 4203 Hampton Avenue in Montreal, not far from 2226 Girouard Avenue. Gertie English, a sister of Eileen's, lived near us when we lived on Montclair Avenue; unfortunately, we never kept in touch with either Eileen or Gertie. Only years later did my brother contact Eileen Oakes and she said that she had wondered what became of my brother and I.



THE EARLIEST FAMILY PHOTOGRAPH

Here is the oldest Morrissey family photograph in my possession. In it we see three groupings of people: three women in dark coats on the left; two women in tan coats on the right; bridging the two groups of women is Edith's son Herb (born 1910) and an unidentified little boy in the centre.

The three women in dark coats are, I believe, Edith (furthest to the left), the next woman is possibly Edith's sister Clara (three years younger than Edith), and the next woman is definitely Edith's sister, my great aunt Essie (ten years younger than Edith). The two women in tan coloured coats are unidentified, but they appear to be mother and daughter, and the little boy seems to be the younger woman's son. In another photograph taken at the same time as this, there is a little girl, apparently a sibling of the little boy. I wonder if the older woman in the tan coat isn't one of my grandmother's relatives, but I have no way of knowing who she really is.

DEATH OF MARTIN MORRISSEY

Here are some of the events of 10 February 1932, the day when Edith's husband Martin suffered a fatal stroke or heart attack; I always heard that he died at the CPR's Windsor Station where he worked in the telegraph office. His passing is a significant event in itself but what was always presented to me as almost as important is that after the news of Martin's death reached home Edith didn't rush off to Windsor Station to be with him; in fact, it was presented that she refused to go as though this "refusal" (if that is what it was) were significant in itself. We can only speculate on the reason behind her decision to stay home; however, perhaps there is an explanation behind this, perhaps Martin was already in the hospital by the time Edith was contacted. But this is refuted because it was said that he had actually died at Windsor Station, a hospital was never mentioned. At any rate, the significance of Edith's staying at home is that it was always inferred that it expressed a distance between Edith and Martin, but this interpretation was left unstated. At the time of his passing Martin was four months short of his fifty-eighth birthday while Edith was fifty-six years old. They had been married for 34 years.

On 19 February 1932, the *North Shore Leader*, a weekly newspaper from Newcastle, New Brunswick—the newspaper owned by relatives of our family and Newcastle where many of our Morrissey relatives still resided—published an obituary for John Martin Morrissey. It states that he was 59 years old and died at the "Montreal Hospital" (probably the Montreal General

Hospital) and that he was survived by his wife, "formerly Edith M. Sweeney, and relatives in Newcastle." An obituary for Martin was also published in the *Montreal Gazette* stating that he died in a hospital. Of course, it is still possible that he died at Windsor Station, since that is confirmed by several relatives, but the obituary could suggest that he was close to death or died after he suffered a stroke and was then moved to a hospital. Publication of the obituary in Newcastle confirms that the Montreal Morrisseys were still in touch with family in New Brunswick; I wonder if this lends credence to the idea that Edith visited the family in Newcastle after Martin died?

There seems little doubt Martin had a problem with alcohol, as have other family members. My father must have already left school in 1932 when his father died, he would have been twenty years old at the time. My father's obituary states that he graduated from St. Leo's Academy in 1929; however, I always heard that he had to leave school early to help support the family after his father died. My father remembered the children on the street laughing at his father returning home from work drunk. Was it out of exhaustion or intoxication that some evenings Martin would fall asleep at the dinner table reading the newspaper? After Martin's death my father told his mother to move to a smaller flat, he knew that she would end up taking in a lot of relatives in need of a home. Edith's sister Edna Sweeney Taylor remembers that Martin's nickname was "Banty," indicating that he was short in height. He played lacrosse for a team and according to Edna, his favourite expression was "Let's not be sober!"

Martin Morrissey was named after his maternal uncle, Father Martin Callaghan, the popular first Montreal-born pastor at St. Patrick's Church. Edith and Martin's son Alex's full name is Alexander Martin Patrick Morrissey, or as they jokingly said, "AM-PM". Another son, William Luke Morrissey, was named after Father Luke Callaghan; Father Luke was influential and ambitious in Church matters; he helped build the iconic and monumental St. Michael's Church in Mile End and whose intervention with the formidable Sister Helen Morrissey (no relation to us) "saved" St. Mary's Hospital from closing.

With the death of two of their daughters it was the boys' girlfriends, and later their wives, who helped bring a stronger feminine presence back into the home. Frank married Eva Dubois (born in August 1899); William married Lilian Bateman (born 11 April 1902); Alex married Ivy Lewis (born in 1906); Herb married Dorothy Magrane in 1939; and my father Edgar married my mother Hilda Parker in 1940. I am not too sure how much the women were like sisters or if it was just my mother who kept in touch with them, but she always liked the Morrisseys and told me that even after she remarried (to Graham Nichols) she preferred the Morrissey name over Nichols.

A curious aside is that my father went out with My Auntie Dorothy before she went out with his older brother Herb. The two brothers were best friends for many years and as I've said, we lived almost next door to Uncle Herbie and Auntie Dorothy and their family on Oxford Avenue in the mid-1950s. Dorothy was present with my mother in the hospital room when my father died.

Edith Visits California

It may have been soon after Martin died when Edith, accompanied by three of her children—Edgar, Herbie, and Mabel—visited her brother Fred Sweeney who had moved to a place called Riviera—possibly a working-class suburb of Sacramento—in California. Fred was

born on 18 March 1880, so he was Edith's next younger sibling. He married Leah Oppenheim and they had five children (Eileen, b. 1909; Fred, b. 1913; Edith, b. 1917; Dorothy, b. 1919; Edward, b. 1923). Leah was born around 1886 in England but the family later moved to Montreal. Fred and Leah seem to have been a married couple, and had a child ("Alina" (Eileen) who was listed with them in the 1911 Canadian Census); however, there is also a marriage listing for Fred and Leah in 1915 at a United Church in Lachine, Quebec. Leah died in California around 1924 and Fred had a second marriage to "Rose", an Irish immigrant to the United States; Fred seems to have had no children with Rose. Fred died in Los Angeles in 1968. Fred and Leah are buried at Wood Lawn Cemetery in Santa Monica, CA.

Edith and her children had little money on this trip to California so they travelled as cheaply as possible. Arriving by train in a city they didn't know, they visited the "Travelers' Friend" at train stations and found reasonably priced accommodation. It was very hot and the nights were cold while they were in Riviera. On the journey home they stopped in Toronto and Mabel went to a local branch of the Bank of Montreal, for whom she worked in Montreal, and took out \$5.00, all that they had for the final part of the trip home.

I remember in the early 1960s being present when my grandmother received rolled bundles of newspapers in the mail sent by her brother Fred from his home in Los Angeles, California. The front page of the newspapers was printed on coloured newsprint, pink or green, instead of the usual white paper. I think it was also that day, when Edith received these newspapers, that Bella the cleaning lady was there, waxing the floors on her hands and knees in the foyer, her brown nylons rolled down to her ankles.

VISITING NEWCASTLE, NEW BRUNSWICK

There was a trip that was mentioned to me, purportedly taken by Edith in the mid-1930s, to visit our Morrissey relatives living in Newcastle, New Brunswick. Could a postcard of the Morrissey Bridge, a bridge that was named after the son of Martins' third cousin, John Veriker Morrissey, a cabinet minister in the New Brunswick legislature and later a Member of Parliament in Ottawa, and kept in the side board in the dining room be counted as proof of this trip? Probably not, except that Martin and Edith had some knowledge of the family in New Brunswick and other family members kept in touch with the family in Newcastle; I've already mentioned, Lily McCabe's letter of 18 June 1956 to Kathleen "Tally" Morrissey of Newcastle and to Martin's obituary being published in the *North Shore Leader* in Newcastle. Incidentally, Tally was one of the first social workers in New Brunswick; she studied at McGill University in Montreal.

In the 1920s Dr. Herb Morrissey, from Newcastle, was studying medicine at McGill and, I was told by his daughter Jane, that he considered visiting Edith and Martin. He knew of his Montreal relatives.

When our family arrived in New Brunswick from Ireland in 1837 several family members worked on Beaubear Island, which is located on the Miramichi River near Newcastle; they worked in some aspect of building ships, an industry that existed there at that time. This work came to a close as the ship-building industry declined and within two years they bought land and began farming, they had a homestead in the Semiwaggon Ridge area, near Barnaby River, about ten miles south of Nelson-Miramichi and one of Jane Morrissey Allan's brothers still owns some of this land.

The Morrissey family that moved to New Brunswick came as a group, it included the parents, Patrick Morrissey and Mary Phelan (both born in the late 1700s), and their children and possibly grandchildren: Patrick and Mary's children were apparently born in Mullinahone, Tipperary, Ireland; they are John Morrissey (b. 1806), Michael Morrissey (b. c.1806), Mary Morrissey (b. 1809), Patrick Morrissey (b. 1815), Laurence Morrissey (b. 1818; he is Martin's grandfather) and Catherine Morrissey (birthdate unknown; died, possibly on 12 April 1893; buried: possibly, but not definitely, at Notre Dame des Neiges Cemetery, Montreal). Note that the original family spelled their surname with no final "e", as "Morrissey".

Laurence's older brother Patrick married Rose Farrell on 28 October 1838, at St. Patrick's Chapel, Nelson, NB. Their children are Catherine, William, Mary, Patrick, Anne, John Veriker (the "famous" politician), Sara Jane, Edward, and Francis. Patrick died on 3 August 1881 in Newcastle. It is several of Patrick and Rose's children—John Veriker, William, Edward, and Francis—who interest us the most.

A mystery surrounds the final years and resting place of our "progenitor" Patrick Morrissey. It is substantiated by several members of the family that one of the children, a son, returned to Ireland and that Patrick went to visit him after the death of his wife Mary Phelan and that Patrick died while in Ireland. Since we can account for all of the sons who came to New Brunswick in 1837, there must have been an unidentified son who returned to Ireland. Nevertheless, we still don't know where Patrick is buried in Ireland. Lily McCabe, a daughter of Martin's sister Margaret Morrissey McCabe (born in Montreal on 28 October 1849; she died in Montreal on 8 April 1931) mentions in her letter to Tally Morrissey what she heard regarding her great grandfather, Patrick Morrissey: "One of the sons went back to the auld sod after a few years, our Progenitor Patrick went to visit this son after the death of his wife & died at home." Since I don't have the date on which Mary Phelan died I can't comment further on this.

After Laurence Morrissey arrived in Miramichi in 1837 he married Johannah Meany (pronounced "Main-ee"). As was common among immigrants when Laurence married Johannah he married someone who came from a town not far from where he came from; Johannah was from Carrick-on-Suir, a town not far from Mullinahone. Laurence and Johannah's first born children are Michael and Thomas (Martin's father), both were born in New Brunswick. In the early 1840s Laurence and Johannah, and their two sons, moved to Montreal. Laurence and Johannah were in their early twenties. Their other children were all born in Montreal, they are John, Mary, Patrick, and Margaret.

The children of Laurence and Johannah are Michael, born in January 1838 in New Brunswick; he died in July 1861 in Montreal at the age of 21 years, he worked as a shoemaker. Next is Martin's father, Thomas, born in New Brunswick (I believe he was born on 25 April possibly in 1843), he died in 1916. The following children of Laurence and Johannah were born in Montreal: they are John, born in May 1843 and died in April 1844; Mary, born in August 1844 and died in June 1866; Patrick, born in October 1847 and died in May 1848; and Margaret, born in October 1849 and died in April 1931. The following were baptized at Notre Dame Cathedral, probably a day or two after their birth: John on 10 May 1843; Mary on 11 Aug. 1845, she died when she was 21 years old; Patrick on 07 Oct. 1847; and Margaret on 28 October 1849. The following are dates for burials: John on 02 April 1844; Patrick on 27 May 1848, age seven months; and Mary on 19 June 1866.

This, then, is Laurence and Johannah's family, one in which most of the children did not live long lives. Of six children four died and two, Thomas and Margaret, went on to have large families of their own. In 1867, a few months after Canadian Confederation; Thomas married Mary Callaghan and Thomas and Mary are Martin's parents.

Laurence displays some behavior that is questionable even all these years later; considering our family history his behavior could be the result of alcohol. Another possibility is that it was not a happy marriage. The first instance of this is that he was not present at the baptism of one and possibly two of his children. This can be excused, an important event was missed but perhaps there was a good reason for this. Laurence and Johannah did well in Montreal considering they arrived here with very little; they came to own residential property on Vallée Street. But then something else stands out—I don't quite understand what it's all about—but it is possible that Johannah left her share of the Vallée property in her will to her son Thomas and not to her husband Laurence. If this is accurate, it shows some wariness or distrust of Laurence by Johannah. It appears that not all was well in the family. A last will and testament can be a medium for people to exact their "revenge" or "justice" on the still-living and leaving one's property to one's children and not to one's spouse seems unusual if not vindictive. Vallée Street no longer exists but it was located where Complexe Desjardins is situated in downtown Montreal, across the street from Place des Arts, between and parallel to Ste. Catherine Street and present-day Boulevard Rene Levesque.

We don't know much about Johannah but we do know that for some years after she moved to Montreal she kept in touch with her relatives in Clonmel, Tipperary. Lily McCabe writes in a previously mentioned letter from 1956 to Kathleen "Tally" Morrissey: "my grandmother was "Joanna" [sic] Meaney of Carrick. Mother [this refers to Laurence's sister Margaret Morrissey McCabe] had a cousin correspondent in Carrick, in her young days, who was church organist." Johannah must have had aunts and uncles and their children were still living in Clonmel after 1850 with whom Johannah, living in Montreal, kept in touch. Lily McCabe's mother was Margaret McCabe, Laurence and Johannah's youngest child. Dr. Herb Morrissey's daughter, Jane Morrissey Allan, spoke to me of Tally Morrissey who was in her nineties at the time; I believe she was living with her nephew Brendan Morrissey in Miramichi. As well, a direct descendant of Lily McCabe is a lawyer who lives only a few blocks from me. "Tally" Morrissey is a grand-daughter of John Veriker Morrissey; she died in 2003 at age 92 years.

A year to the day after Laurence's wife, Johannah, died and was buried on 29 April 1880, after waiting the obligatory year of mourning, Laurence married the much younger (about half his age) Emma Marie Mercier; she had been boarding near where Laurence and Johannah lived on Vallée Street with two much older men, one of whom was an old friend of Laurence's. Laurence and Emma's marriage lasted twenty-three years, until Laurence's death, and they had two children together, John Laurence Morrissey, baptized 6 March 1882 and William Patrick Morrissey, baptized on 19 May 1883, both at Notre Dame Church. Both sons died relatively young; John Laurence Morrissey survived the longest and was buried at Cote des Neiges Cemetery on 30 September 1915, age 32 years; this son is buried with his Laurence at Cote des Neiges Cemetery but under the erroneous surname "Laurence". By the time of John Laurence Morrissey's death in 1915 Laurence had also passed away, on 19 January 1904. How Emma Marie Mercier and her two sons were treated by the family, and what became of her after Laurence's death, is unknown to us. Any head stone for Laurence has long ago disappeared; Johannah Meaney is buried in an adjoining grave.

After they married in 1867, Martin's parents, Thomas and Mary, lived at 36 Vallée, across the street from Thomas's parents Laurence and Johannah. In 1870 they lived at 35 Vallée; and from 1884 to 1892 they lived at 45 Hermine Street, only a block south of St Patrick's Church. Mary probably attended services at St Patrick's Church given by one of her three brothers, Fathers Martin, James, or Luke Callaghan. By 1893 Thomas was foreman at R. Mitchell and Company, which was quite a responsible position, this company specialized in

manufacturing brass fittings and is still in operation but manufacturing items of a more contemporary nature. The family lived at 78 Plymouth Grove and then at 80 Plymouth Grove from 1895 to 1896. Plymouth Grove disappeared for the construction of the Ville Marie Expressway. In 1896 the family moved to 532 St. Antoine Street, in what was then the separate municipality of St. Cunegonde, it is now a neighbourhood adjoining St. Henry and not far from where Martin and Edith lived.

It's interesting to note other members of the family who had lived in New Brunswick but who also moved away; for instance, a nephew of Laurence's, and son of Patrick Morrissey and Rose Farrell, Dr. William P. Morrissey, moved to Greenpoint, a neighbourhood in Brooklyn, New York, and he made a name for himself as one of the first police surgeons in New York City. There's a letter that is important to our family dated 1866 from William to his Uncle Laurence that gives a good idea of what family members were doing at that time. Dr. Morrissey was also involved in politics in New York; I always laugh when reading this quotation from Dr. Morrissey, it is a comment he made at an animated meeting of the Democratic Party, Seventeenth Ward, Greenpoint, and reported in the *Brooklyn Eagle*, 27 February 1884:

In referring to me I want you to speak of me as "Doctor", not as "Mister".
... If you were outside and gave me any of your guff I would punch you
in the nose. Why don't you remember that you are in the company of
gentlemen and act as one?

He must have been quite the character but he also exhibits a temperament that is common to some of us Morrisseys; observing other people's bad driving I have exclaimed, "I'd like to punch him in the nose!" I have fortunately refrained from ever doing this... Apparently, my Grandfather Parker used to say something similar to this.

Another sibling of William P. Morrissey and nephew of Laurence is Frank Morrissey, he married Louise Holt at St. Patrick's Church in Montreal in 1899. I wonder if Laurence attended this wedding and what the circumstances were that lead them to marry in Montreal; it would also be interesting to see the marriage certificate and if one of the Callaghan priests married them. The newlyweds moved to St. Paul, Minnesota where Frank worked for a horse and buggy company until the automobile took over and his company switched to manufacturing car accessories. I understand that Louise Holt's family came from Quarryville, a few miles from Miramichi, where they ran a post office, and that Louise was born in Chatham, New Brunswick. Perhaps Louise was Protestant since Chatham seems to have been mostly Protestant while Newcastle was mostly Catholic. By the way, Jane Morrissey spoke disparagingly of anyone coming from Quarryville.

Frank and Louise had two sons, Hugh and John. Both sons majored in art at St. Thomas College and both became commercial artists. Hugh Morrissey worked for the major department stores in St. Paul and later, when he was about forty years old, he started a detective agency. Frank and Louise's other son, John Morrissey worked for LIFE magazine from when it began publishing. Frank and Louise died of cancer about a year apart, around 1926, both living in a nursing home at the time. I mention this because Hugh Morrissey, the grandson of Frank Morrissey contacted the family in New Brunswick in the late 1990s. Hugh searched for his Morrissey roots, made a few phone calls, and when he found the family in New Brunswick he flew out to meet them from his home in Minnesota! I think he was quite the hero in Miramichi for doing this! A few years later Hugh and I talked on the phone several times about family history. One of the

curious things he asked me was if there was any mental illness among the Morrissey women... I didn't know what to say as what qualifies someone as a "Morrissey woman", just the surname?

Another sibling of William P. Morrissey is Edward Morrissey who interests us because he is the father of Jane Morrissey Allan's father, Dr. Herbert Morrissey (born Seattle, Washington State, 25 May 1895). *The Dictionary of Miramichi Biography* states that Dr. Morrissey's father Edward Morrissey (born Newcastle, 1858) "and his wife, Sarah [M] Campbell, a native of New Westminster, B.C., were separated in the late 1890s." After leaving Newcastle Edward worked for a railroad laying track in Western Canada and Oregon in the United States. After the marriage with Sarah Campbell failed Edward and Sarah's three sons, Francis, William, and Herbert were sent to live with relatives in New Brunswick. The two older boys eventually returned west to live with their mother, but Herb stayed with his aunt Jane Morrissey Quinn; years later Jane Morrissey Allan was named after her.

Dr. Herbert Morrissey accomplished much in life: he earned a B.A. from St. Francis Xavier University in 1916; served overseas in World War One; studied at McGill University where he earned his M.D. in 1924; and studied at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor where he specialized in pediatrics. He then returned to Newcastle where he practised medicine until his death on 17 December 1968. Father Whelan, later Bishop Whelan (until a few years ago there was a Bishop Whelan High School in Montreal), performed the marriage ceremony of Dr. Herbert Morrissey and Mary (Calder) Duffy at St. Patrick's Church in Montreal in April 1938. I suspect that Mary Duffy (and possibly Frank Morrissey's wife, Louis Holt) was Protestant or divorced and that is why the wedding was held in Montreal. Dr. Morrissey's four children came late in his life: Paul (born 1939); Jane (born 1940); Richard (born 1942); and Kathleen (born 1943). **My mother with me, Edith with me, back porch 2226 Girouard Avenue, around 1953.**

The name I always heard referred to regarding my grandmother's visit to Newcastle was that of Dr. Herb Morrissey who, apparently, made such a lasting positive impression on my grandmother and other family members in Montreal who may have met him (I am qualifying whether the meeting ever took place). There is a sad part of this story and that is that Dr. Morrissey only met his mother again when he was sixty-five years old. Dr. Morrissey's father, Edward Morrissey lived the rest of his life in British Columbia; Edward died in Penticton, B.C., on 17 December 1940 at the age of eighty-one years. Jane pointed out to me that this is the same date, 17 December, on which Dr. Herb Morrissey died.

The best known sibling of Dr. William P. Morrissey is John Veriker Morrissey who became a cabinet minister in the New Brunswick government and then a Member of Parliament in Ottawa; his son Charles Morrissey followed his father into political life and was also a Member of Parliament. Charles is the father of "Tally" Morrissey. Scandal is associated with John Veriker Morrissey's name, including regarding the eponymously named Morrissey Bridge between Newcastle and Chatham, New Brunswick. John Veriker Morrissey also had a problem with alcoholism.



Here is an interesting piece of information. Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King kept a diary from 1893 to a few days before his death in 1950, it is nearly 30,000 pages long, and almost eight million words. There are several references to John Veriker Morrissey, to his wife, to his son Charles, and one reference is to a Dr. [Herb?] Morrissey in King's diaries. If I remember correctly, Prime Minister Mackenzie King's diary entry regarding John Veriker Morrissey were a few references to his drinking problem.

There is some scandal surrounding John Veriker Morrissey's political career; in response to accusations of conflict of interest leveled at him, on 11 April 1916, at the Legislative Assembly, New Brunswick, the Honourable John V. Morrissey, got up and announced with some righteous indignation,

They are after Morrissey because he is a Grit, and they say meaner things,
they say they are after him because he is an Irishman and a Roman Catholic.
My father was born in good old fighting Tipperary and I am proud that I am
a Catholic. Shame on the man who would traduce a man for the faith that is
in him.

This may be the first recorded reference of when some of us Morrisseys began referring to ourselves in the third person; at times I do this myself. The most famous example of this is the singer known simply as Morrissey, no apparent relation to us, who dropped using his Christian names years ago.

In the late 1990s I placed a query regarding our New Brunswick relatives in a newspaper published in the Maritimes, soon after I was contacted by Dr. Herb Morrissey's daughter, Jane Morrissey Allan, who lived in Newcastle, and from her I learned a lot about the early Morrissey family history in New Brunswick. One day I met Jane and her husband, Dr. Allan, for coffee on Greene Avenue in Westmount, they were visiting one of Dr. Allan's sons in Montreal, and we discussed family history. Jane told me that when her father was a student living in Montreal in the 1920s he didn't contact our family, listed in the telephone directory, because the surname of our family is spelled slightly differently from his. As I noted above, the family in New Brunswick spell our surname omitting the final "e", as in "Morrissey". If Edith did travel to New Brunswick, she probably met Dr. Herb Morrissey, but I don't know if she made the trip and there is no one left to say if she did or not.

GREAT AUNT LIB

Edith's aunt, my father's Great Aunt Lib, seems to have been a lovely person. Aunt Lib was Edith's aunt on her mother's side, she was Elizabeth Flanagan Ryan. She married a Ryan—perhaps a second marriage—and she worked for a newspaper, perhaps “The Montreal Witness”. She had one son who moved to St. Louis, Missouri, with whom she visited but decided against moving there to live as it was too hot and humid. She returned to Montreal and lived at Edith's flat on Girouard Avenue.

When my parents were first dating back in 1938 or 1939 my mother would visit my father at 2226 Girouard Avenue. She knew that my father's Great Aunt Lib also lived there. My father wanted to make a good impression on my mother and having a lot of relatives, old people at that, living at home didn't seem to him the way to do this. For this reason the old folks stayed in the back part of the flat—probably in the kitchen at the end of the hallway—when my mother

would visit. Although my mother met Aunt Lib she never met my father's grandfather, James Sweeney, who also lived at the flat, because he died on 11 January 1937 the year before my parents met. My parents had been married for almost four years when Aunt Lib died on 3 January 1944.

In the sideboard at our home on Oxford Avenue (and later on Montclair Avenue) there was an envelope containing an old newspaper clipping from the *Daily Witness* published in Montreal on 14 April 1906. Now yellowed and literally crumbling with age, it is on the historical event of the Great Fire of Montreal that took place in 1852. I have always wondered if this was an article written by Aunt Lib, why else would the clipping have been kept all these years? A large part of the downtown area of the City of Montreal was burned to the ground and about 20% of the population was left homeless; it was at this time that wood construction of buildings was replaced, by city code, in favour of the red brick buildings that are common here. The *Daily Witness* was so strongly a Protestant newspaper that in 1875 the Church forbade Roman Catholics from reading the paper.

Until recently Montreal was mostly a city of renters; this must be qualified by saying that many of these same people who rented in the city owned country cottages. Montreal is a city in which summers are very hot and winters are very cold; I remember when I was young lying in bed unable to sleep because of the oppressive summer heat. From around the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s Edith and her family rented a summer cottage on Montreal's West Island, at Pine Beach. Aunt Lib also stayed at the Pine Beach cottage. This was a place of summer cottages back then, now it's a bedroom suburb, about fifteen minutes by car from downtown Montreal; winterized summer cottages are located on streets adjoining Lake St. Louis and can be seen for a few seconds as you speed along Highway 20 at 120 km an hour, with other cars passing you. Aunt Lib loved the boys—Edgar, Herb, Frank, Alex, and Bill—all of whom were her great nephews (I suppose Mabel, her great niece, should be included in this list but some women are partial to boys over girls. Aunt Lib loved both living at Girouard and her summers at Pine Beach.

Not all of the relatives were as fortunate as Aunt Lib. One way Edith dealt with family members living with her in the city is that they didn't join her in the summer months when she lived in the country, whether at Pine Beach or the cottage in St. Eustache. I never saw Auntie Essie in St. Eustache; however, in the early 1940s at Pine Beach Aunt Lib was the exception to this. **Photo: Mabel outside the St. Eustache cottage, summer 1947.**



When she was young my mother was nervous being with old people, as some young people are, and subsequently avoided Aunt Lib. Perhaps this was also because Aunt Lib had skin cancer on her face, and she remembered there was an unpleasant smell from this; nevertheless, Aunt Lib was remembered fondly by her. I don't know how long Aunt Lib lived with my grandmother, but I know she was buried at Cote des Neiges Cemetery on 3 January 1944, next to the Morrissey family plot. When I visit the family plot I always think of Aunt Lib, buried beside her mother, in a plot adjoining my grandmother's.

AUNTIE MABEL

After Martin Morrissey died, my father told his mother to move to a smaller place, he knew that if she didn't move she would end up taking in a lot of needy relatives. He was a little more prescient in his prediction than he probably would have liked as we also lived with Edith for several years. It can't have been the most pleasant experience living there, not with Mabel complaining regarding our presence or that the flat was crowded.

Auntie Mabel would complain to her mother telling her that she was “the fish”, someone who was being taken advantage of by other people, in this case by my mother. This complaint was said within hearing of my mother or said when Edith was looking after my brother or me while our mother visited her own sick mother who lived a few blocks west of Girouard on Hampton Avenue.

By the early 1950s my maternal grandfather had retired from the Montreal Fire Department but his wife was not well, she had a heart condition. To visit them my mother would walk to Hampton along Burnside (later renamed Western Avenue, and later still renamed Boulevard de Maisonneuve). In the 1950s it was still like a country road with the train from Windsor Station to Montreal West and then out of the city running parallel to the street. I mention the train to Montreal West because only a few years later, in late October 1956, my parents left from this train station for Boston and the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital where my father passed away a few weeks after arriving there. Before arriving at the Montreal West station, this train passes through the Westmount train station where, just a few years before, a woman had been hit by a train and her body was removed on a luggage cart, passing the window where my mother and her mother were sitting; my mother shielded her mother from this sight as her mother was ill and needed to be protected from shock. They had just left Windsor Station for Woodstock, Ontario, where relatives from that side of the family lived.

Like many people, we have always been a family of walkers and in the evenings, just as in St. Eustache, the family would take walks together. In Montreal it was perhaps a walk along Sherbrooke Street—as long as weather permitted—window shopping, discussing the day's events, or politics, or just small talk. I sometimes walked with my mother and always enjoyed these occasions; walking is still my favourite and only exercise. My wife and I used to take many walks and always enjoyed this time of being together and talking.

Auntie Mabel also complained about how dusty the Girouard flat had become since we moved in, and when she came home from work at the Bank of Montreal she'd ask her mother if she'd done the cleaning. I suppose that this was a “dig” at my mother, a way of saying “did you do the cleaning that Hilda didn't do?” An expression of Mabel's was “Why don't you lie down and rest yourself?” and “Go and rest yourself.” I guess she said this to her mother.

Mabel had been engaged to someone who died in World War One; there was a photograph of her deceased fiancé in a drawer in the living room. I don't know if marriage would have softened Mabel's personality or not. André Oakes, a son of Eileen Oakes (Martin's niece), a godson of Mabel's and Alex's, remembers Mabel as being a “nervous” person. She wasn't the most pleasant person at home but apparently she was well liked where she worked at the bank. My cousin Bob tells me of Auntie Mabel's visits on Sundays after church to his parents', Herb and Dorothy's, home on Oxford Avenue after the service at St. Augustine Church; these visits were known for their regularity and Mabel's insistence that they be entertained in the living room. We lived only a few doors from Uncle Herb and Auntie Dorothy but I don't remember Mabel ever visiting us, perhaps this was a blessing in disguise!

A mannerism of Mabel's was that when she was eating if there was a bit of "stray" food still on her plate, she would push it onto her fork with her thumb. Like some of her other siblings she wore dentures and sometimes they would click as she talked or ate. I remember my Uncle Alex's dentures sometimes sliding forward as he adjusted them in his mouth. My mother used to say that my father's dentures were really good quality, that they looked like natural teeth. In the past in Quebec, and probably elsewhere, dentists would extract teeth rather than fill cavities. "Bad teeth" were derogatorily referred to as "Quebec teeth", as tooth extraction was common here, but it was a phrase that was true in the old days. I doubt that Edith saw a dentist for many years, if ever; by her old age she had very few teeth left. My mother, despite (as she said) never drinking milk except in a cup of hot tea, had excellent teeth most of her life.

Is there a connection between having all of one's teeth extracted and heart disease? There seems to be a connection between the two. Mabel had high blood pressure, I assume she died of a stroke. Could my father have developed a heart condition after having his teeth extracted? It seems unlikely but later in life Edith denied that Edgar had rheumatic fever when a child. Indeed, Grandma and Auntie Mabel complained to my mother that he took too many hot baths and blamed my mother for this; they somehow connected taking hot baths with his illness. In fact, I can remember an odour of not washing coming from Auntie Essie at one time, but enough said on this. Personal hygiene was not taken for granted in the past as it is today. We know that both Edgar and his older brother Herbie had rheumatic fever and were quarantined at home for some months during which time their brother Alex lived with Edith's parents.

I remember going downtown with Mabel on Saturday afternoons in the late 1950s and eating at Woolworth's basement lunch counter on Ste. Catherine Street and Mabel buying lemon squares that we brought home on the bus in a white cardboard box tied with string. I remember on one of these trips eating turkey dinner, gravy, cranberry sauce, and mashed potatoes, and one time drinking two chocolate milk shakes and having an upset stomach afterwards. Another time, I saw the organ grinder who stood outside of Morgan's Department Store, now The Bay, across the street from Philip's Square. Only a year or two later, in 1960, I attended Auntie Mabel's funeral (all of our family's funerals were at Collin's Funeral Home, at the corner of Sherbrooke and Marcil Avenue, just a block from Girouard). We were gathered at Mabel's casket and just before it was closed Grandma bent over and kissed Mabel, her dear daughter, on the lips for a last time. There might be greater sorrows but having one's children die, even in their sixties, is a terrible thing for a parent to endure. People live with all sorts of unhappiness—sickness, death, betrayal, grief—and if you live long enough most of these will be visited on you. This is the curse of having feelings and living a long life. Another curse is truly loving someone, you will have unbearable grief if or when that love is lost.

The division between Protestants and Catholics at that time is also reflected in the separation of funeral homes. On the opposite corner of Marcil and Sherbrooke, just across the street from Collin's, was MacGillvray's Funeral Home. It was opened at the prompting of the priest at St. Augustine's Catholic Church—Auntie Mabel's church—as a Catholic alternative to Collin's. Our family always patronized Collin's. Both funeral homes were only a couple of blocks from Edith's home on Girouard and *Ma's Restaurant*, that belonged to friends of Auntie Dorothy's, was directly across the street from both Collin's and MacGillvray's.

Today, MacGillvray's is a part of Collins Clarke MacGillvray White funeral homes; St. Augustine's Church, after being closed for a number of years and almost converted into condos, became the Riverside Church (an evangelical Protestant church), but *Ma's Restaurant* is still there although now it's called *Maz*, it's still (phonetically) the same name that it used to have but it seems to be in conformity with Quebec's infamous language laws.

THE CALLAGHAN PRIESTS

The three Callaghan priests—they were known familiarly as Father Martin, Father James, and Father Luke—were brothers of Martin Morrissey's mother Mary Callaghan. All three were remarkable men, born into the working class they were educated at the Sulpician-run College de Montréal, which is adjacent to the Grand Séminaire just a little east of Atwater and Sherbrooke Street West.

A story that I always heard from my mother when growing up was that Edith went to see one of the three Callaghan priests for financial help but was refused. This couldn't have been after Edith's husband died, as I once thought, because the youngest and only remaining of the three priests, Father Luke Callaghan, predeceased Martin Morrissey; Luke died on 12 April 1931, ten months before Martin's death on 13 February 1932. I also ruled out Father Martin because he had a reputation for being generous. Edith's request might have been made after Martin and Edith's daughters, Elsie and Stella, died in 1911 and circa. 1905 respectively. Since one of the two daughters is buried in the grave site belonging to another member of the extended family, at Cote des Neiges Cemetery, there is the suggestion of difficult financial times. The fact is we'll never know who the priest was in this situation except that the request was turned down and was remembered by family members many years later; however, I suspect it was Father Luke.

Father Luke seems a rather stern man, perhaps this was his nature or perhaps it was because he had a lot of responsibilities, he was the pastor of one of the largest congregations in Quebec, at St. Michael's Church in Mile End. He helped to raise funds to build this church and he had a prominent role in society. I visited St. Michael's Church several times; built in the Byzantine style of Hagia Sofia in Istanbul, this church is a major landmark in Montreal and can be seen from the mountain look-out above St. Urbain Street. The Father Luke Callaghan Memorial School was located just around the corner from St. Michael's Church until it closed a few years ago.

Father Luke's brother, Father Martin Callaghan, the oldest of the three priests, died in 1915; he seems to have been an outgoing and generous man, a man with the common touch, and evangelical in converting people to Catholicism. Many evenings he could be found playing his violin on a street corner in Chinatown, only a block from St. Patrick's Church; he even helped financially to put a Chinese student through medical school. Father Martin was the first Montreal-born pastor at St. Patrick's Church but his forced retirement from this position was remembered by him with some bitterness, he was "only" the "interim" pastor and he was replaced around 1906 by Father McShane, the son of a former mayor of Montreal. This is evidence to some pandering to wealth with an eye on upward mobility by the group running St. Patrick's. Father Martin does not seem to have adapted to the *nouveau riche* mentality of these parishioners while Father McShane was a rather severe man who was rewarded for his social and political connections, that he had only by birth, over the real accomplishments of Father Martin, a man of compassion.

The third brother is Father James who seems to have been a quiet and unassuming man; Father James served beside his brother, Father Martin, at St. Patrick's Church for many years. There is a plaque which I have seen that commemorates Father James's years in the priesthood stored in the basement at St. Patrick's Church; by its weathered conditioned it must have been on the outside of a building (probably St. Patrick's) and removed when it was in its present state. He died in 1901.

Father Martin stayed true to his roots; he was much loved by the common people. When he died his plain wooden casket passed through the streets, with people standing on the sidewalks, the men with their hats removed out of respect, on its journey to the crypt at the Grande Seminaire. I have visited the graves of both Father Martin and Father James at the Grande Seminaire and Father Luke's grave at Cote des Neiges Cemetery. Father Luke appears to be the patriarch of the family while his two older brothers are much more humble in their final resting place. These three men were all remarkable, all were highly educated and rose to positions of ecclesiastical prominence in the Church; all three ministered to the Irish English-speaking population but they also assimilated into the French sector of the population.

The Callaghans were deeply Roman Catholic. The parents of Mary Callaghan are John Callaghan (1821-1905) and Bridget Phelan (1822-1890); John Callaghan was a long-time lay member of the Third Order of Saint Francis of Assisi. The Morrisseys in general don't seem to be a very religious family but we are a family of lawyers, doctors, and businessmen. And one poet.

A LIVELY PLACE

The Girouard flat was a lively place, there was always someone coming or going. In the days before television, Alex and Ivy and their son Herbie came on Saturdays and slept over; on Sunday evenings, Armand and Eileen Oakes visited to play cards with Ivy and Mabel. This must have been in the mid-to-late 1940s. They say Alex's hair turned white overnight when his son "little Herbie" was born. In the 1930s another of the boys, Frank, must have attended many hockey games at the old Montreal Forum, it was located on the corner of Ste. Catherine Street and Atwater. My cousin, Bob Morrissey, Uncle Herb and Auntie Dorothy's son, tells me that his father "was closest to your dad (Edgar), because they were similar in age. The common bonds were music and sports. My father would tell me how they'd stand in line to get tickets to the old Forum hockey games, and wait for Grandma to come by with sandwiches."

In the 1940s my father attended hockey games at the Forum, he had tickets from Mr. Coleman, the president of the CPR for whom he worked as secretary and my father was also head of the real estate department. I remember in the 1950s and 1960s, before the metro was opened around 1966, standing at the Atwater bus terminal waiting for the Number 15 bus east along Ste. Catherine Street; there was a giant billboard on the front of a building on the north-east corner of Ste. Catherine and Lambert Clossé of a man smoking a cigarette—was this for Belvedere cigarettes?—and every few seconds he would emit a giant puff of smoke from his mouth, as though smoking.

Edith's sons were always very close to their mother, several phoned her every day. The daughters-in-law were also close, my mother was especially close to Auntie Ivy, but also in the 1940s with Uncle Bill's wife, Lillian, and Uncle Herb's wife, Dorothy. For several years my father was a member of the Herb Morrissey Jazz Orchestra. Herb's occupation is listed as "musician" in Lovell's City Directory in the late 1930s. The band played in hotels and dances and my father's participation in it ended in the early to mid-1940s. When Uncle Herb and Auntie Dorothy married at St. Patrick's Church my father was Herb's best man. Perhaps there had already been a "falling out" as my mother was not invited to their wedding.

One evening in the mid-1980s I was visiting my mother at her home and we were looking at some old papers in the basement. I think my son was present. There was an old steel filing box that once belonged to my father and still contained a few of his papers but nothing of consequence. Then I noticed a locked panel in the top of the box that I opened with a



screwdriver; it contained a note my father had written in the 1930s, saying something like he was going to a dance, either this was at the time when he first met my mother, or around that time. My mother read this handwritten paper and then tore it up. I respected her privacy although I have wondered since then what was written on this sheet of paper. Did it refer to something about my Auntie Dorothy with whom my father dated before dating my mother? Of course, since my father had dated Dorothy before he went out with my mother there may have been some residual bad feelings. What this "falling out" was all about will never be known, only speculated on.



Uncle Alex arrived at the Girouard flat every Sunday between 2:30 and 3 p.m., with magazines, and he took his mother and his Aunt Essie out for a drive; I used to go on some of these Sunday drives with them. One Sunday afternoon we delivered old clothes to the Welcome Hall Mission just off St. Antoine Street. I guess it was also in the 1950s when Uncle Bill used to visit on Sunday afternoons and Mother's Day. My brother writes, "Every Sunday, our uncles came to see Grandma Morrissey. The talk was often about Quebec politics and who paid whom for a bridge or road contract." **On left: My aunt and uncle, Herb Morrissey and Dorothy Magrane Morrissey. Bottom: Stephen Morrissey (l.), with cousins (Herb and Dorothy's children) Linda and Bob Morrissey, April 2012.**



Perhaps because her sons were hockey fans Edith watched the Montreal *Canadiens* on *Hockey Night in Canada* broadcast Saturday evenings on CBC television; there isn't much that is more Canadian than ice hockey and in many homes across Canada Saturday evenings were reserved for watching hockey on television or listening to a hockey game broadcast on the radio. The Montreal *Canadiens* were our national team back then if you didn't live in Toronto, the only other Canadian city to have an NHL team.

I remember staying at Edith's one evening and walking into the darkened living room, the *Canadiens* were playing on the black and white television in the living room just to the left of the faux fireplace; those were the days of the original six NHL teams and Danny Gallivan's excited announcement, "He shoots, he scores!" I also remember walking in the halls of the Sun Life

Building in downtown Montreal when I was young—kids had a lot less attention paid to them back then and went to the strangest places, like wandering the halls of the Sun Life Building—I don't remember why I was there—and coming across, by chance, the head office of the NHL that was located there. You can see how Montreal has declined in the last forty years with so many head offices moving to other cities, including the NHL to New York City, Sun Life Insurance to Toronto, and the CPR to Calgary.

One Sunday afternoon in the early 1960s, returning home from a drive, either outside the Girouard flat or at the corner of Girouard and Sherbrooke Street, the door closed on my grandmother's finger when she got out of Uncle Alex's car. She was dragged a few feet until Uncle Alex, seeing what had happened, stopped the car. She lost the tip, possibly to the first joint, of one of her fingers. Was it the right hand, the finger next to the little finger? Who is left to remember? I remember her wedding ring on her left hand, how tight it was and almost impossible to remove sixty-five years after marrying Martin Morrissey.



Another memory from the 1950s is visiting Girouard at Halloween. My mother drove my brother and I over to show Edith our costumes, I was dressed up as Aunt Jemima that year with a big skirt and a scarf around my head and my face blackened with a burnt wine bottle cork. I will always remember the smell of dust in the stairwell to her second floor flat and associate it with my grandmother's flat. When I began teaching at Champlain College in 1976 I would walk up stairs to my office and there was present that same smell of dust reminding me of the inside front stairs at Girouard. **Frank Morrissey, c. 1930s; Frank Morrissey's wife, Eva Dubois Morrissey; their daughter, Patsy Morrissey. At bottom, a 1979 photograph of Patsy's four children (from left to right: Don, David, Christopher, Patti-Jo and their father, Pat Robb on far right).**



Eileen Clapperton Oakes, who was born in 1901, is my father's cousin. She is a daughter of Martin's sister, Mary Ann Morrissey who married Alex Clapperton. After Eileen married Armand Oakes the family lived on Hollowell Avenue, just a few blocks from where Edith and Martin lived, on the border of St. Henry and lower Westmount. Just up the street from Hollowell is St. Leon's Church, on present-day Boulevard de Maisonneuve, where Eileen and Armand were married. The Oakes lived for many years on Hampton Avenue in N.D.G., so it was not too far for them to have walked over to the Girouard Avenue flat for these visits. I heard that a sister of Eileen's, Gertie English, lived near us on Montclair Avenue, but we never visited with her. Eileen's son, Andre Oakes, who contacted me a few years ago, remembers that Mabel was a "nervous" type; Mabel is Andre's godmother, Alex is his godfather.



In the early 1900s, Mabel and Eileen Oakes would collect the pension of their grandfather, Thomas Morrissey, from the Robert Mitchell Company where he had worked as a brass finisher and a foreman. As I mentioned before, when Stella, Martin and Edith's daughter, died in 1905, she was buried in the Clapperton family plot at Cote des Neiges Cemetery. You can see how close the two families were to each other. Eileen was much loved by all; she died in 2001 in her 100th year.

Before he found employment at the CPR, my father applied to the Royal Bank of Canada, perhaps at



the suggestion of his sister Mabel who was a teller at the Bank of Montreal. He was turned down for employment at the Royal Bank possibly for health reasons. I think it was also in the early-1930s that my father went on vacation to Miami by himself, and there are some photographs of him while there, with palm trees in the background. He also worked as a treasurer for a baseball club at NDG Park, more familiarly known as Girouard Park.

The full name of Edith and Martin's daughter Stella is "Stella Gennett Agnes Morrissey"; I don't know where the name "Gennett" comes from and I can't find anyone with this name associated with our family. The only other reference to the name that I can find is of a pre-1950 Montreal based music recording company, I am in possession of one of their records from my father's collection of 78 rpm records. I suppose the story behind Stella's name will remain a mystery but it leads me to discuss something of how musical the family used to be. My father played several instruments, including a Paramount Wm. L. Lange four string banjo, with mother-of-pearl inlay, made in 1926; he also played the guitar and string bass. There was a cabinet by the front window next to the maroon couch in the living room at Girouard, bursting with old sheet music from the 1920s and 1930s; I remember this cabinet as does my brother; he writes, "there was old sheet music such as the music for 'Ramona'. There was also a photo of the grave of a WW1 soldier, who was Auntie Mabel's boyfriend."

When we lived at Girouard my brother's bed was a couch in the living room, against the wall near to the fireplace. Another couch, probably the maroon couch with its sagging springs and always covered with white sheets, was on the other side of the room against the north wall. My brother writes, "I used to do flying leaps off the mantle of the fireplace, across the room, and on to Grandma's couch. There was also an old floor model radio in the living room near the window overlooking Girouard Avenue." These "flying leaps" gave Mabel something to talk about. Like the rest of Edith's grandchildren, my brother has "all positive feelings" about our grandmother. He writes, "Once, in her old age, she said to me that she would love to run around the way I did. In first year McGill [around 1964], she told me to keep on working even if I did not like McGill." She was about eighty-eight years old at the time.

There was also an old record player that required winding to make it play, including a tin box of steel needles for the record player, in a cabinet in the dining room just to the right of the door from the staircase entrance; below the turntable section of the record player (it was broken by the time I discovered it) were shelves for sheet music and I remember looking at an old Hollywood movie magazine that was left there. There was an article and photographs in one of these magazines, from the 1920s or 1930s, it was about a wealthy American family, perhaps the Vanderbilts, and they were dressed in Roman togas, their faces painted white, and carrying a woman on a platform above their shoulders. There was something disturbing and creepy about these people.

The telephone was also located in the dining room; the original telephone was a wall mounted wooden box and used a crank to make phone calls, it was located in the dining room near the window that overlooked a path from the basement to the lane; this is also where the new black rotary dial telephone was later located. Edith had a party-line, which means that more than one residence used the same telephone line; when you picked up the phone to make a call there might be a neighbour already talking to someone and you'd have to wait for them to hang up before you could make your own call.

I remember a Federal election when one of the political parties sent a car for Edith to be driven to the polling station, I think they phoned to ask her if she needed this service. Our MP was Mr. Hamilton, a Progressive Conservative and the Postmaster General; he also visited



Collin's Funeral Home for the visitation for my father. This election must have been in the late 1950s or early 1960s when John Diefenbaker was running against Lester Pearson.

One evening when I was around ten years old I traveled by city bus to stay over at my grandmother's; I carried a small light brown attaché case, it was not very practical for papers but it had belonged to my father and it contained a few clothes for the next day. I remember being on the bus and looking down Girouard, I could see the St. Lawrence River off in the distance. This was around 1960 and it may have been on this overnight visit that I sat beside my grandmother on the bench in front of the old upright piano in the living room; I asked her to play something, some music, but after a few moments of silence she said she could no longer play. In late April 2012 I mentioned to my cousin Linda Morrissey Morand my memory of asking Grandma to play the piano and she said that our grandmother used to hold her on her lap and play the piano for her. I think we all must have asked her to play the piano. My brother remembers "the old piano and that once, and only once, Grandma played the piano. My recollection is that it sounded like an 1890s honky-tonk tune." **On left:**

My uncle William Morrissey with his sister-in-law, my mother, Hilda Morrissey, November 1973; below, Uncle Bill's granddaughter Jo-Anne Morrissey Steen, Whiterock, B.C.

My father, his brothers Frank and Herb, all had their own record collections, old 78 RPM records. When I discovered my father's records I would listen to them on a record player that my mother had bought for me; there was also a set of recordings of Chopin's *Polonaise* and I remember lying on the floor in the dining room at our Oxford flat listening to this music. A few years ago I made an inventory of my father's records—my mother kept all of them until she moved to Toronto in 2007—and later Patti Ferrari, Uncle Frank's granddaughter, sent me an inventory of Frank's record collection. I still love big band music—Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, Artie Shaw, and others—and I used to listen to "Music From the Good Old Days" on Sunday morning on CJAD radio back in the early 1960s after returning home from church; the "good old days" in the 1950s referred to the 1930s and 1940s and this is still one of my favourite eras for music and black and white romantic-comedy movies that I watched on television in the 1960s and 1970s. To me the "good old days" are the 1930s and 40s, and I find it strange to hear of "golden oldies" from the 1980s and 1990s. I grew up watching black and white movies starring Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Dorothy Lamour (the "Road To" movies), and Jack Benny, and I associated these actors with my uncles.

THE FIRST THREE GRANDCHILDREN: PATSY, BILL, AND HERB

I never met my Uncle Frank—Francis James Morrissey—who was born on 25 October 1898; he married Eva Corrina Dubois who was born in August 1899 and they had one child, a daughter, Patsy Morrissey. According to my mother at one point their home life wasn't very stable and Patsy “practically lived at Edith’s.” Frank was involved with minor league hockey, but also with the old Montreal Maroons hockey team. **On right: three photographs: Edith Sweeney Morrissey, Ivy Lewis Morrissey, and Alex Morrissey; all are holding Alex and Ivy’s newborn son, Herb Morrissey, back porch at Girouard, around May 1938.**

It was said that Frank got in with the wrong crowd, older people who drank too much. Frank and Eva lived in a flat on Decarie Boulevard, only a block from Edith's home on Girouard, from around 1928 to 1932. In the 1930s, Frank and Eva lived at the Corona Hotel on Guy Street, near where the Guy Metro station is now located, “His Majesty’s” theatre was also not far from this location.

Frank's obituary, published in the *Montreal Gazette* on Wednesday, 23 February 1938, states that Frank died of a "pneumonia attack." The article summarizes Frank's important professional accomplishments: he organized the start of the juvenile, midget, and bantam hockey league in Quebec; he was secretary treasurer of the Quebec Amateur Hockey Association from 1924 to 1928 and vice president of this organization for the next two years; he was president of the QAHA the following season. Frank was also the secretary of the Bankers Hockey League. He originated the idea of registration cards that were later in general use among various branches of the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association. The *Gazette* obituary states that he left behind his wife "Mabel" Dubois (this is an error, her name was Eva), his daughter Patsy, his mother, a sister, Mabel, and four brothers, William, Alex, Herb, and Edgar. The funeral was from Collin's Funeral Home on Sherbrooke Street West the following Friday evening, 25 February 1938.

Although Patsy was my father's niece he was only eight years her senior and they were very close, "he was like a brother to her". My mother remembers visiting Patsy at the hospital when she gave birth to twins Don and David Robb, born 15 September 1938, at (I believe) the Western Hospital at Atwater and Ste. Catherine Street. This is also where I was born in 1950 and since then the building has been repurposed, first as the Montreal Children's Hospital and this year, 2015, it stands empty.



Patsy had two more children: they are Christopher (born September 1944) and a daughter PattyJo (born in the early 1950s). Frank's death in February 1938 predates the birth of his first grandchild by about seven months; he was only forty years old when he died.

After Patsy and her family moved from Montreal in the early 1950s their names still came up, but when they were mentioned my brother says that he was "confused as to who they were. There was mention of twins." I never knew much about Frank or his family except that my mother mentioned that Patsy was my father's cousin, that she had visited Patsy and the twins when they were born, that Patsy had often stayed at Edith's, and how close my father was to Patsy. Patsy was my grandmother's first grandchild and she must have been close to her, so it is bewildering to me that we never heard about Patsy and her family after she moved from Montreal. I suppose life intervenes, people are busy, especially when they have five children to look after, and perhaps Grandma did hear from Patsy and we were never told of this.

There is a memorial to Frank, published in the *Gazette* just after he died, that my mother kept in a side table beside her bed, it had been kept there by my father. Frank's death was an enormous loss for the family. I rememebr both my mother and my Uncle Alex mentioning Frank but it was always a mystery as to where they moved or what had become of them.

The next grandchild is the son of William Morrissey, also named William, who was referred to as "young Bill". I heard my mother refer to my Uncle Bill as "old Bill" and my cousin Herb referred to as "little Herbie". I don't remember meeting young Bill but I do remember being at his mother's funeral in 1963. Again, it was at Collin's Funeral Home.

My mother told me that Uncle Bill and his wife Lillian Bateman sent young Bill to a private school on the West Island because they were having problems with him; this was before World War Two. Apparently, as well, Uncle Bill would visit his mother by himself, there may have been some kind of falling out between Lill and Auntie Mabel or Grandma. On the other hand, Lill had five sisters and her own family probably took up most of her time for family. In the early 1950s Bill and his family lived in NDG, in a "Cape Cod" style cottage located only a few blocks from the "Cape Cod" that my wife and I bought in 1997. Uncle Bill was on Westmore Avenue, we are on Belmore Avenue.

During World War Two young Bill served in the Canadian army overseas, fighting the Germans in Occupied Holland and Belgium, and his mother, Lillian (her nick name was "Gimmie"), used to read his letters on the telephone to my mother. Uncle Bill also served in the army reserves during the War. Auntie Lill was very concerned for her son, their only child, because of the bad conditions overseas for Canadian soldiers during the war. My mother also heard about Lillian's five sisters—Audrey, Jennifer, Mary, Nicki, and Dorothy—all were born in Dalhousie, New Brunswick and moved to Montreal around 1920. Lillian's father was Chipman Bateman; Chipman is young Bill's the middle name.

Uncle Bill, who died on 11 May 1977, was at my brother's wedding in 1970; at my graduation from Sir George Williams University in 1973; and at my first wedding in 1976. My first wife's name was Pat and he called her Patsy, assuming a familiarized version of a name that meant something to him. He made the effort to represent the family at these events despite a difficult time at home with his son. As well, my mother was at Jo Anne's wedding around 1969, Jo Anne is young Bill's daughter and Uncle Bill's granddaughter who was raised by Uncle Bill and Auntie Lill.

I remember Uncle Bill at my graduation on 26 November 1973 from Sir George Williams University; my mother's friend, Kay Fielding, from the Car Accounting Department at the CPR was also there. Just after he arrived Uncle Bill said, "Whenever I think of Stephen I think of Alex; Alex loved Stephen." He said that Alex liked to "put me on" (and he did!) and that if

Grandma were still alive she would have walked to the graduation it would have meant so much to her. The graduation ceremony at Place des Arts was a great experience for me, I graduated with Honours in English with Distinction, which I hadn't expected. Uncle Bill gave me a card and a cheque for \$10.00; my mother gave me a card and a cheque for \$100.00.

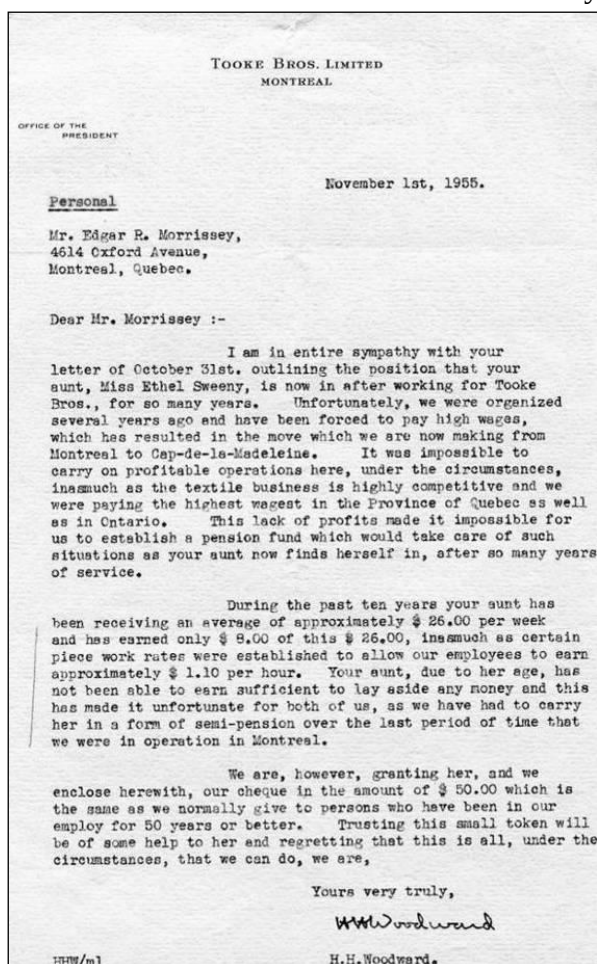
My mother said that when Bill and Alex got together they really liked to talk. We're a family of talkers, we love to talk and tell stories; in fact, as a teacher I sometimes thought of myself as a "professional talker". Uncle Bill said that Grandma was a forceful person, that she had to take charge many times when the family was having difficulties. A few days later thinking over what Uncle Bill had said about Grandma, that she would have walked to my graduation in order to be there, I remembered her reaction when I said I had already had my Confirmation at St. Matthew's Church (in December 1963) and she wasn't told prior to the event. She wasn't happy about not being present; I regret this. I also regretted having missed both my Uncle Alex's and Uncle Bill's funerals. After cancer and a series of strokes Uncle Bill died on Tuesday, 10 May 1977. He left behind his son, his granddaughter and grandson-in-law, and two great grandchildren, Alison and Jamie.

Young Bill was a part of the liberation of Holland in 1944-45, and then he returned to Canada where he wasn't able to fully make a new life for himself. He ended up living with his father in Ville St. Laurent and the family had problems with him after Uncle Bill died. The

anecdotes I have heard about young Bill don't bear retelling, they are your generic stories of alcoholics making life difficult and unpleasant for themselves and for other people. This is not to excuse young Bill's behavior or the behavior of alcoholics, it is self-destructive and devastating. Young Bill died in 1990 and is buried with his parents at Mount Royal Cemetery. .

Jo-Anne Morrissey Steen, young Bill's daughter, once spoke to me about a Morrissey family bible; she suggested it was in the possession of Uncle Bill's brother Uncle Herb, but I had never heard of this family bible. When I asked my cousin Bob Morrissey about a Morrissey family bible he said he didn't know anything about it.

Martin and Edith's grandchildren, then, are Patsy and Bill, born in the early 1920s, followed by Alex and Auntie Ivy's son, Herb, born in 1938. Herb's birth was followed a few years later when Herb and Dorothy had two children in the early 1940s, Robert and Linda. In the mid 1940s and in 1950 my brother John and I were born. There is a thirty year age distance between Patsy, the first grandchild, born in 1920, and myself, the last grandchild. Here, again, are the names of the seven grandchildren, Patsy, Bill, Herb, Linda, Bob, John, and Stephen.



GREAT AUNT ESSIE LOSES HER JOB AT TOOKE'S

There must have been a lot of excitement the evening Edith's sister, Ethel ("Essie") May Sweeney returned home from work on Friday, 28 October 1955. She had just been let go from her factory job at Tooke Brothers, clothing manufacturers. She was now sixty-eight years old and had worked at Tooke's for fifty-three years, since 1902 when she was seventeen years old; she was born in Montreal on 23 May 1885.

It is true that Tooke's had probably been "carrying" Essie, as they claimed, that at age 70 she was no longer as productive as the younger workers. But she had no pension, no savings, and had lived with Edith since the late 1930s or early 1940s. From 1945 to 1955, Essie earned \$26.00 a week, or \$1,352.00 a year; she paid about \$15.00 a month (\$180.00 a year) in rent for her large room that she sometimes shared with other relatives. The problem for any retired person is to replace earned income with pension or investment income; this was impossible then and it is becoming impossible once again for middle and working class people.

In the early 1950s Edna Sweeney Taylor used to visit her sisters Edith and Essie on Girouard. Auntie Edna's husband, Bertram ("Bert") Taylor, used to play on the floor with me when I was very young. Then, in the early 1960s, after Bert died, Edna moved to 2226 Girouard from her home on Rosedale Avenue not far from her church, Rosedale United. Edna shared Essie's bedroom with her. Both of these women seemed really old to me at the time but now I see that they were only a few years older than I am now.

One day around 1967 when I was returning home on a city bus I saw Essie sitting on some chairs at the entrance of the old Steinberg's Grocery Store, at the corner of Wilson and Sherbrooke Street West, across the street from the NDG Post Office building. Steinberg's used to be referred to by Edna as "Steins". My brother remembers seeing Edna and Essie sitting together at the small triangular shaped park located where Hampton, Cote St. Antoine Road, and Sherbrooke Street West converge across from the Royal Bank on the opposite corner.

Edith passed away in 1965. In the three years that followed Edith's death in 1965 Essie became increasingly senile and deaf; however, with Edna's help she continued living at the Girouard flat. This would also not have been possible without Auntie Dorothy who brought them groceries and visited them. One day my mother received a phone call from Auntie Ivy, Edna was beside herself with worry and anxiety when Dorothy was away in the States helping her daughter Linda and couldn't visit them. It's terrible being old.

4614 Oxford Avenue,
Montreal, Quebec,
October 31st, 1955.

PRIVATE

H. H. Woodward, Esq.,
President,
Tooke Bros. Limited,
441 de Courcelle Street,
MONTREAL, Que.

Dear Sir:

I should like to bring to your attention the case of one of your employees who, as a result of your operations being transferred from Montreal to Cap de La Madeleine, Que., was obliged to retire after fifty-three years of uninterrupted loyal and, I am sure efficient service with your Company. I think this is a record not shared by too many of your other employees. The party in question is my aunt, Miss Ethel Sweeney, who owing to her present age of sixty-eight years will find it impossible to secure other gainful employment in that particular type of work which she performed at Tooke's.

As you are aware, Miss Sweeney left your Company last Friday afternoon after such a lengthy association without any pension, and the wages earned throughout these many years did not enable her to build up any financial reserve to take care of her daily needs during the days of her retirement. Added to this is the fact that for a long period she was the sole support of her father and sister. Miss Sweeney is now living with my widowed mother and sister.

The purpose of this letter is to enquire as to the possibility of some consideration being accorded my aunt in the way of a severance bonus which would materially help her before she reaches the age where she can apply to the Government for an Old Age Pension. You may be assured that the only grounds on which this letter is being addressed to you is the fact that Miss Sweeney gave so many years of her life to Tooke Bros., and the unfortunate position she now finds herself in. On the other hand, you may feel disposed to grant her the usual purse of money which she tells us other employees of Tooke's have received after fifty years of service, and which in her case must have been overlooked by her supervisory officers.

Your sympathetic support of this appeal is most respectfully solicited.

Yours truly,

(Edgar R. Morrissey)

Essie Sweeney died on 17 July 1968, thirteen years after she was dismissed by Tooke's Brothers, and is buried at Mount Royal Cemetery, Montreal. I suppose the flat was vacated by the end of July 1968. Then, Howard Taylor, Edna's son, placed his mother in an old folks' home in Almonte (just outside of Ottawa) Ontario, near where he lived; Edna died on 23 January 1970 and is buried in the Sweeney-Flanagan plot at Mount Royal Cemetery where Essie is buried.

As an aside, not far from Essie's grave is the Tooke family plot; we may as well be nice to each other because we all end up in the same place, don't we?



DEATH OF EDGAR R. MORRISSEY

"They cried their eyes out" is how my brother describes when Edith and Mabel heard the news of our father's death. My father, Edgar Morrissey, died on 16 November 1956 at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston. Several days before he died my mother phoned Uncle Herb for someone to come to Boston to help her at this terrible time of impending death; Herb asked his mother if she would make the trip to Boston. Edith was now eighty-one years old and she and Auntie Mabel were already looking after my brother and me, so it was Herb's wife Dorothy who joined my mother in Boston. How ironic that the two women present at this time were women that he had once gone out with and one that he had married. Auntie Dorothy was beside my mother in the hospital room when my father died; he was only 44 years old. The nurse held his hand for a pulse, his head shook a little, and he died. His last words were "God damn it." **Edgar Morrissey (1940s), his wife Hilda Parker Morrissey Nichols, (early 1960s). Bottom: John (r.) and Stephen Morrissey (l.), sons of Edgar and Hilda Morrissey, in March 2012 outside of 4614 Oxford Avenue in Montreal.**



My mother told me that she had no idea that my father's condition was as bad as it was when they left Montreal from the Montreal West train station; it was only when they were met in Boston by a porter with a wheel chair that she realized that things were worse than she had thought. Sometimes I walk along the platform at the Montreal West train station, in appearance it is somewhat how it looked in 1956



although beneath the outer appearance it is updated and now a station for commuters. When I am there I think this is where my father left for Boston from which he did not return alive; this was the last of Montreal—the last of his home—that he saw before he left.

A few days before my parents left Montreal for Boston, my mother's father, John Parker, said to her, "He's not going to get his toe nails cut", he was aware of the gravity of the situation and didn't think that she was aware of how bad things were. Also, he didn't approve of her going to Boston alone, he felt one of the Morrisseys should accompany her; this wasn't possible for him as his wife, Bertha Parker, was also very ill, she died the following year.

My mother knew that my father wasn't well, she had to give him injections and, for many years, she drove him to work every morning. I remember my father sitting on the balcony railing waiting for her to drive the car to the door. I remember horse drawn milk wagons on the street and Audrey Keyes, the little girl next door and my first friend in life, coming to her front door. Doctors still made house calls in those days and one doctor who came to the house to drain liquid from my father's stomach had a German concentration camp number tattooed on his wrist, this was probably around 1955. Our family physician was Dr. McCallum whose son went on to become a prominent cardiologist at the Montreal General Hospital. My mother's hard work caring for my father kept him alive much longer than he otherwise would have lived, as she was told by one of his doctors.

In the early 1950s my father read an article in *Liberty* magazine about advances in heart surgery that referred to a Dr. Dexter, this is how it came about that he went to Boston and how Dr. Dexter became his physician. My father made all the arrangements, including where my mother would stay in Boston. When they arrived at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, my mother thought they would only examine my father and determine his condition. But Dr. Dawson, the physician at this first meeting, told my mother that he was in much worse shape than expected; it was diagnosed within minutes after his arrival that his case was hopeless. A few minutes later my father asked her "What's wrong?" but she wouldn't tell him or her children, she thought she should protect all of us from the results of this first examination. But he knew that things were not good.

Other people with a heart condition similar to my father's—including a friend of the family—a condition caused by rheumatic fever when they were children, were treated successfully only months after my father's death. This family friend lived into his eighties. My Uncle Herb also had rheumatic fever when he was a child but he lived to age 88, he passed away in 1998, so this illness didn't affect everyone in the same way. It's important to remember that medical science is developing very fast and one shouldn't necessarily give up hope for a cure even when a cure or remission seem impossible.

At home in Montreal, while my mother was in Boston, my grandmother and Auntie Mabel came and stayed with my brother and I at our home at 4614 Oxford Avenue; my brother spent some of the time in Boston with our mother and there's a photograph published in a Boston newspaper of the two of them at a museum looking at a sculpture from the Far East. You would think that they were just two tourists, a mother and her young son, having fun day out visiting a museum.

I remember that Edith and Mabel slept in the master bedroom across the hall from my bedroom, the hall light was left on for me all night; this was the room where one morning, only a year or two before, as a very young child, I lay in bed between my mother and my father who was still asleep, and my mother said to me, "Kiss your father." How different things were to be; now I lay in bed, a six year old child, praying to God that "Daddy come home alive." I remember during this time, when my grandmother and Auntie Mabel stayed with us, Uncle Alex bringing us a box of cinnamon flavoured *Dentyne* chewing gum, with its red label, and chewing so much of it that I made myself sick. I remember Edith standing at the front door on Oxford Avenue bringing in bottles of milk that had been delivered. It must have been very cold outside because

the milk had frozen and pushed up the cardboard lid at the top of the bottle. I remember the yellow pencil Grandma wrote with, only the smallest stub of the pencil remained. I remember her wedding ring—a simple gold band—it had been on her finger so long it could no longer be removed. And I remember most of all lying in bed, a six year old, praying to God that my father not die, that he come home alive.

I'll never forget being told by my mother that my father had died, I was six years old; she said, "It is better this way, it is better that he not suffer." I remember the little toy train engine, powered by large round batteries, my mother brought home for me from Boston after my father had died. Someone, I think a cousin on my mother's side of the family, stepped on it in the hallway between my room and the dining room almost as soon as I received it and broke one of the wheels; and then the engine, because it ran on batteries and had a light on it, became a light I took to bed with me and kept under my pillow.

My friend Audrey Keyes remembers her mother telling her that something had happened and I could not go out to play with her. At the funeral at St. Matthew's Anglican Church, our family's church, I sat beside my mother and my brother in a front pew with relatives sitting behind us; a few feet in front of us was my father's casket. I remember my exact thoughts, that I should cry and that this was expected of me, but that I didn't really know what this was all about. I look at six year old children and think how small and innocent they are, how impossible for such a child to understand or cope with something as dreadful as the death of one's own father.

These were very dark days, weeks, months, and years that changed all of our lives. In fact, I don't think one ever truly overcomes such a childhood experience, it stays with one one's whole life. Does time heal grief, as we have been told that it does? I don't think so. The intensity of grief is lessened but the experience one has suffered reconfigures one's thought processes, especially in a child; one is changed by a traumatic experience that cannot be reversed and the consequences of this trauma will be different in each person. Indeed, there is some grief from which one never recovers, it lessens, you learn how to live with it, you think of it less, but one should not expect to ever "get over" the grief of having lost a parent when one is a small child.

We did not have a lot of money after my father's death. My father's salary ended, there was no pension, and my mother was now a single parent with hospital bills to pay. There was also rent to be paid for our flat and my mother did not want to disrupt life by moving to a cheaper location although, years later, she wondered out loud if it would have been better had we moved. My brother, who was only ten years old, helped our mother by going over household expenses with her, bills received and bills paid, rent to Mr. Hoolahan, and my brother showed a maturity that few ten year olds have. I remember he found work washing floors at a small apartment building on the corner of Somerled and Marcil Avenue and when the janitor refused to pay him my mother's brother, my Uncle John, went to convince him otherwise. People will even cheat children.

My grandfather, John Parker—by 1956 he had retired after over twenty-five years service with the Montreal Fire Department—also gave my mother \$5.00 a week to help with expenses, and when we would visit my Grandmother Parker would say to him, "Have you given Hilda her money?" They, too, knew grief for their first son, Willie Parker, had died in 1914 at age two years and nine months; from photographs you can see that he was a beautiful child, always dressed in white clothes and with longish blonde hair, he was much loved by his parents and grandmother.

I don't know that Bertha Chew Parker, my maternal grandmother, ever stopped grieving for little Willie. She had a heart condition, a thyroid condition, and my mother helped to look after her when she was ill. My English grandparents—they emigrated to Canada from Blackburn,

Lancashire, England around 1911—worked hard for whatever they had in life. I don't know when Grandma Parker began to dislike having her photograph taken; she isn't smiling in the few photographs we have of her; in some old photographs you can see where she has torn out the part in which she appeared. Grandma Parker died in 1957, a year after my father's death; unfortunately, I have no memories of her.

On a lighter side, my parents were always very well dressed; they were a beautiful couple; I now see how "glamorous" they were! My father was someone who loved learning, both of my parents regularly visited the Atwater Library (formerly the "Mechanics Institute"), and my father bought someone's books to build up his own home library. Most of these books that were in my possession I have given to my son; I remember them in two white bookcases (made by a carpenter at the CPR's Windsor Station) as you entered our Oxford Avenue flat. My father was someone who was liked by all who knew him as I was told by my Auntie Muriel Parker, she added that she never saw him angry; my mother recalls that someone called him "Doc", and when he married (as was the custom of male humour in the past) he was called "Benedict", as in "Benedict Arnold".

For my first six years I was a child with two parents and an older brother. We lived a middle-class life in a middle-class neighbourhood. There was a new car in the garage—a 1954 Chevrolet—one parent went to a salaried job, the other stayed home and looked after the family. We had a country cottage that my parents had built within walking distance of my grandmother's cottage. We had a "normal" family life and a rich extended family life. Everything wasn't perfect—it never is—but by 1950s standards, by our standards today, it was a good life. And then our lives were reconfigured: our old life as we knew it was over. We were now a household headed by a single mother who found work at the Car Accounting Department at the CPR's Windsor Station. A girl was hired to meet me after school when my mother would previously have been there. Unfortunately, one afternoon this girl had a party in our home and when I arrived home from school she was lying unconscious on the floor drunk. The girl was expelled from high school and her life was changed. We relied on my grandmother for help babysitting me at her home when I was sick or feigned being sick, which I think I often did. Otherwise, I remember coming home after school to a dark flat and being alone, my brother was in his bedroom studying, and I lay on the floor in front of the television in the living room with my feet on the radiator.

An episode in my father's early life is also important and possibly accounts for his antipathy to the Roman Catholic Church; this criticism can be seen in his Last Will and Testament in which he stated, quite forcefully, that he wanted his sons to attend Protestant schools, not Catholic schools. Until the 1990s public education in the Province of Quebec was organized along confessional lines; that is, there were schools for Protestants and schools for Catholics, organized in both Protestant and Catholic school boards, and these were further divided into English Protestant and English and French Catholic schools. If you were Jewish or Eastern Orthodox Christian you attended an English Protestant school, only Roman Catholic French children were welcome in French schools. That's why when I was growing up my friends were mostly Jews and Greeks.

Like my father's brothers and sister, my father attended a Catholic church when he was young. Edith often let the boys sleep-in on the weekends; they had school or work during the week and needed their sleep. Still, my father could amuse his family by rattling off at a high speed various prayers from church. I know that a priest made an inappropriate, sexual advance towards him. Today, I'm surprised that my father ever spoke of it at all, although the details that were omitted but can be left to the imagination. These things were usually left unspoken so,

perhaps, he mentioned it only to my mother. This may have been what turned him against Catholicism or it may have been as simple as seeing that the English Catholic schools were inferior to the Protestant schools, or so Protestants believed...

My father loved school and education, he attended St. Leo's Academy in lower Westmount; I don't know if he graduated in 1929 as it states in his obituary or if, as I always heard, that he quit school to help support the family. But he continued to educate himself by reading and learning practical skills necessary for his job at the CPR, for instance short hand. He travelled in Mr. Coleman's private rail car on business trips to the United States, Mr. Coleman was the president of the CPR. He worked as Mr. Coleman's secretary and he was the head of the CPR's real estate division. In the early 1950s he wrote to his senior at the CPR reminding him that he had not received an increase in his salary for some years. Another employee, who had a university degree, was advancing at the CPR in a way that was not open to my father who had never attended university.



SUMMERS IN ST. EUSTACHE

By the mid-1940s Grandma and others in the family had decided to stop renting a country cottage at Pine Beach, on the Island of Montreal. They decided to buy a cottage further from the city; it was at this time that Edith and her son Alex purchased a cottage on 11th Avenue in St. Eustache. It was probably in 1946, just after the war, and the earliest photographs of the St. Eustache cottage are dated 1946. After the Girouard flat that is so important to all of us in the family, our summers in St. Eustache, surrounded by family, are a rich and happy treasure of memories. We always referred to it as *St. Eustache* but I have been corrected by several people, the cottage was

actually located in Two Mountains, in Deux Montagne, on 11th Avenue, and this is a neighbourhood of St. Eustache. **Left: the St. Eustache cottage on 11th Avenue, circa spring 1947.**

Around 1948-1949 my parents built a cottage not far from Grandma's 11th Avenue cottage, but after my father's death in 1956 our cottage was sold and my mother rented a small place that was located behind the home of Mr. and Mrs. Goodier (until recently I thought the name was spelled "Goodyear", as it is pronounced, but I have been corrected by my brother), who were prominent members of the Salvation Army, and this small cottage was almost directly across the street from my grandmother's cottage. Next door to our rented cottage was the residence of the writer, Joseph Schull and his mother.

During the day in St. Eustache, while our mother was at work at the CPR's Windsor Station in the city, my brother and I usually went our separate ways, playing with friends our own age who lived on the street; our grandmother and Auntie Ivy were there if we needed anything. I think I hung around with them part of the time; even then I was not very adventurous regarding straying from home.

My brother writes that he "used to ride Auntie Ivy's 28 inch lady's bicycle in St. Eustache. I recall the area being sprayed to kill mosquitoes with DDT. We stayed inside during sprayings



but DDT went everywhere. Also, I recall the lack of plumbing. Water came from a well using a hand pump. The toilet was a can emptied by the 'can man'. The cans were cleaned at the foot of 9th Avenue using water from the Lake of Two Mountains. We recognized water pollution in the area in the mid-to-late 1950s." And it's true, we always knew that the water was polluted even though we continued to swim in it, I guess we were ahead of our time in terms of the ecology. **Left: Edith outside the St. Eustache cottage, around 1947. Right: Edith Sweeney Morrissey, Stephen Morrissey, and Mabel Morrissey driving to the States, around 1957.**

I also remember the mint smell of *Pepsodent* toothpaste used by my mother in the morning before she left for work. There was a porch on the side of the cottage where she would get ready for work; grey water was poured into a funnel that emptied on the grass outside. We used an electric hotplate, it had two burners, on which to cook. For a while there was a curfew for young people in St. Eustache, perhaps it began at 9 p.m., and after that time young people had to be home. I remember walking home and hiding because of the curfew, I think we jumped in a ditch, so as not to be discovered by the police. My caution was no doubt exaggerated and the curfew was perhaps different than I am describing it.

A few times we drove down to the States, to Plattsburg or to the "Santa Claus Village" just across the border in New York State. On one occasion my mother was annoyed because the others went to "Santa Claus Village" leaving behind my brother and I, the very children such a trip is meant for and who would have enjoyed going. The excuse was there was no room in the car and I can imagine this being said. Another time, returning from the States, my grandmother sat in the back seat of the car and had several packages of cigarettes in her purse, not because she smoked (she didn't smoke or drink), but so Canadian custom's duty wouldn't have to be paid on them. I guess Uncle Alex thought the customs wouldn't look in an old woman's purse and he was right. Canadians returning from visits to the States have always smuggled something home, it used to be cotton shirts and blue jeans and white bed sheets—anything cotton— but also alcohol, candy bars, and cigarettes, all of which were more expensive or not available in Canada.



I remember when the green coloured bread van stopped outside Grandma's cottage on 11th Avenue—the back doors opened and we crowded around—my grandmother or Auntie Ivy bought a "Mae West" cake for me. These are still popular in Quebec, chocolate coated white cake with a vanilla centre, wrapped in clear cellophane costing maybe 5 or 10 cents at the time. "Mae Wests" and "Joe Louis" cakes are really good, especially "Mae Wests".

I remember visiting a popular beach not far from home and almost drowning when I walked out into the steeply descending floor of the river where the water was over my head, but my brother pulled me out by the arm. I doubt anyone realized that I was in the water over my head or that, after being pulled out by the arm, that someone almost drowned. This incident was never mentioned again. There was another, more popular beach in the opposite direction and I remember going there with my Uncle Alex.

The boy I played with in the country was Nicky Coppens, a boy my own age, who had recently arrived in Canada from Holland with his parents and older sister. Nicky and I would walk on the railroad tracks near the train station and once we climbed into a parked boxcar and opened boxes of Band-aids that had still to be delivered. One day, walking across the train bridge to the island in the middle of the river, I was almost run over by a silently approaching commuter train; another time we almost derailed a train by putting rocks on the tracks, the train stopped and the engineer glowered at us. We flattened pennies placed on the tracks when trains ran over them; we made bonfires and boiled water; we smoked little cigars on this island in the middle of the river! It was the fun of being ten or eleven years old when your parents don't know what you're up to and you are only peripherally aware, or completely unaware, that these activities might not be suitable for a child! One day a French boy walked passed us on the train tracks and he was yodeling, it was incredible to hear this sound and I have never forgotten that fleeting moment. Meanwhile, my brother played tennis, swam, and had his own adventures.

One day my brother and I climbed into the attic at our small cottage and accidentally made a hole in the ceiling when one of us leaned back on our heels; my brother decided that it had to be repaired before our mother came home from work. An hour later we were walking home from a hardware with a small can of paint and some French kids decided, out of the blue, to confront us; when one tried to punch my brother he held up the can of paint in its brown paper bag and the kid hurt his hand when he punched it, that was the end of that conflict. Our mother said she wouldn't have known about the hole in the ceiling, now expertly repaired, except for a few drops of paint on the wall that she saw when she went to bed.

My brother wanted a 22 calibre rifle and was given this gun as a present by our future step father, Graham Nichols; one summer day he was out walking around with it and the police stopped him and confiscated the rifle; it was later retrieved by our mother. One evening I played Bingo with Auntie Mabel, at the club where my brother played tennis on the next street, and won \$10.00. I still say this was the only money I've ever won gambling. Somewhere, perhaps at a local fair, I won a stuffed animal and when my cousin Kim was born, Herb and Shirley's daughter, I gave it to them for her.

My mother would drive Alex to work, or be dropped off by him where she worked at Windsor Station, and she would return home in the evening by commuter train that ran under Mount Royal and then to Deux Montagnes. Around 6 p.m. most days I would meet her at the train station and we would walk home together. Alex didn't like to drive or drive to work in the morning so he enjoyed it when my mother drove. Alex tended to drive giving the car spurts of gas—accelerate and then coast along with his foot off the gas until it was time to accelerate again—so he wasn't the greatest driver and he seems to have known this.

When you entered my grandmother's cottage, which was fairly small, you first entered a screened summer porch. I remember the smell of newspaper and the wicker furniture in the porch, a smell that is strong on a hot summer day, and the smell of cigarettes, not at all offensive to me but comforting because of the memories it evokes of those days, and a bottle of Coca-Cola on the floor beside Ivy. Is there any better beverage in the summer than a cold bottle of Coca-Cola? Not to me. I don't remember anyone drinking alcohol at the country cottage, not even beer. I remember sitting on the screened porch with my grandmother—the captain's chair that she sat on is all that I have of hers—and Auntie Ivy at the other end of the porch sitting on the wicker couch. Everyday Auntie Ivy smoked DuMaurier cigarettes, drank a bottle of Coca Cola and read the newspaper while sitting on the porch, and often she played golf. I would usually sit beside Ivy, in a wicker chair beside her—while Grandma was at the other end of the porch, sitting in her

captain's chair. When it was hot Edith would blow her hair away from her face by blowing in an upward direction from either side of her mouth.

Other days, opening the porch door, you could see Grandma sitting in a rocking chair in the living room at the far end of the hall. Then you entered a hallway and on the left was my Uncle Alex and Auntie Ivy's bedroom, my grandmother and Auntie Mabel's bedroom was on the right; further down the hall was a living room with my grandmother's rocking chair at the end facing the front door, a day bed against the wall on the left where I think Little Herbie used to sleep, and a large wooden dining room table on the right. I remember what Grandma ate for lunch, it was cheddar cheese wrapped in brown waxed paper, a slice of white bread, and hot tea. There was a sideboard in the living room and a door to a back room where there was a wash



the background on left!).

I loved Uncle Alex and looked up to him, although I didn't realize that this is what I was doing. He was always kind and loving to me. He always treated me with respect, he was never condescending, he was never insensitive to me, he never said a mean word to me; but none of my Morrissey relatives were mean or sharp tongued people, even Auntie Mabel was at heart a good person. I don't know if Uncle Alex thought he was a masculine presence in my life but he was; I think he would have said he was just helping Edgar's son or that he loved me for myself. People were less complicated in those days.

Uncle Herb and Auntie Dorothy also rented a cottage in St. Eustache, I believe it was on 9th Avenue, but they must have stopped going to St. Eustache before we began renting the Goodier's cottage on 11th Avenue because I don't remember seeing them at Grandma's cottage. I

room, a hand pump for water and the outhouse was in the back yard. As for all of the cottages a "can man" came once a week to remove the can of toilet contents and then left behind an antiseptic smelling can in its place in the outhouse. A fond memory is being in the wash room at the back of the house with Uncle Alex and watching as he shaved preparing for the next day at work; I put some shave cream on my face and pretended to shave with a blunt knife.

My Uncle Alex was my favourite uncle and Auntie Ivy my favourite aunt. When I chose my first pair of glasses they were horn-rimmed, because Uncle Alex wore horn rimmed glasses. My brother recalls that as a young child

when I was asked what I wanted to do in life, I replied that I wanted to be "retired"... Uncle Alex's ambition was to retire and live in the country cottage in St. Eustache; however, this was not to be in the way he envisioned it. He smoked cigarettes from an early age and after many years of smoking he developed emphysema which lead to his death. He had repeated ear infections from trying to remove the wax from his ears with a wooden match stick. There was enough money, but not a lot, and Ivy and Alex had a comfortable enough life.

Top: Outside the cottage, Ivy Lewis Morrissey and her son Herb, 1947. Bottom: John Morrissey and our dog, Buddy, around 1959, swimming at the bottom of 11th Avenue (note Uncle Alex in

suspect that in the mid-1950s they began to go to Old Orchard Beach on the Maine coast after Auntie Dorothy had a reconciliation, after many years, with her father who lived in the States.

In the late 1940s my parents built a cottage near a beach (was it El Dorado? That was the beach I visited with Uncle Alex) maybe a mile at the most from Edith's 11th Avenue cottage. After my father died in 1956 it was necessary to sell our family cottage; it was sold to the L'Esperance family who had it winterized for year-round use. Mr. L'Esperance always enclosed a hand-written letter describing the changes they were making to the cottage with their monthly cheque, in equal payments for a number of years in payment for the cottage. They were proud of their new home. This money was a big help in my mother's finances after my father died, it supplemented her income from the CPR, and the letters Mr. L'Esperance wrote were always appreciated. I still have Mr. L'Esperance's letters and would like one day to return them to his family.

One night, when I was around seven or eight years old, I stayed over at my grandmother's cottage and slept in bed between my grandmother and Auntie Mabel; while they slept with their heads on their pillows, my pillow was at the other end of the bed, my feet at their heads, this was how you slept three to a bed in the old days. Auntie Ivy's sisters lived a street over; I remember both Rosie and Doris, and their father Mr. Lewis, smoking his pipe, visiting in the evenings. Ivy's father had a hump back from when he fell off a roof when he was young. My cousin Herb's middle name, Lewis, was his mother's maiden name.

There was often card playing in the evenings, especially in August when it was too chilly to sit outside on the summer porch. Ivy's sister Rosie would come over and the adults would sit around the dining room table playing cards and talking. We used to play a lot of cards, especially Hearts and sometimes Poker. There was also a lot of conversation and I remember a strange discussion one evening of something someone heard on the radio or read in the newspaper. A woman whose whole body was painted gold, or some other colour, had been dumped at a hospital and the paint had to be removed or her skin couldn't breathe and she would have died. It was disturbing enough that she had been dumped at a hospital but she was also painted, what was this all about? Children remember strange things...

It starts to get cold at night on August 1st and we heated our cottage behind Goodier's in the cold damp August evenings with a small Sackville wood stove on which we toasted slices of bread—the top of the stove rubbed clean with the wax wrapping paper in which sliced white bread was sold, and then the bread toasted on it—and we listened to the radio, it must have been the very popular Joe Pine's phone-in show, or possibly some other opinionated radio host, on Radio CKGM from Montreal. That was lots of fun and radio has always been my favourite form of entertainment.

Late one evening news was received that Auntie Mabel had died while visiting Prince Edward Island, it was 19 August 1960, one of those cold August nights reminding us that fall is not far away. Uncle Herbie came over in the middle of the night and woke my mother with the news of Mabel's death. My mother was annoyed at being woken as this was the one night, she said, that she had taken a sleeping pill; later, she asked, "Couldn't they have waited until morning?" My cousin Bob, Herb and Dorothy's son, also remembers that time; he writes, "I also remember the night we received a phone call informing us that Mabel had died of a heart attack while on vacation. My parents immediately left for St. Eustache to deliver the awful news. When told, Grandma's first words were, 'Oh, my poor little Blue Eyes.' She had remembered what she called Mabel when Mabel was a child." I mentioned to Bob that Grandma called my father "Blue Eyes" and he wondered if she was confused by the news of Mabel's passing.

Mabel's death was a terrible blow to Grandma; Mabel was the daughter who never married and never moved away from home; Mabel was the dutiful daughter, her mother's confidante of sixty years. I remember at Collin's Funeral Home my grandmother bending over the casket and kissing Mabel, for a last time, before Mabel's casket was closed. Poor Grandma, poor Mable.

It must have been the summer after we stopped renting our cottage in St. Eustache that we visited my grandmother in the country, that would be in 1963. There was now a small black and white television in the living room. The people who made this such a special place for me were now either passed away or older than ever, and I was not of the age that still wants to hang around with relatives or the old. The days of happy summers there were over and I was nostalgic and sad to see how things had changed. At that visit I showed Grandma photographs, slides, I had taken in Banff, Alberta, where we spent our summers in 1962 and 1963. Uncle Alex commented on how, when you get old, you get special treatment from the young as I showed Grandma the pictures. I didn't realize at the time that she was now about eighty-six years old. I remember thinking at that time how run down everything appeared; the young have a critical and jaundiced eye that is not tempered by understanding that age and experience brings.

Around 2007, a few months before my mother moved to an apartment close to my brother in Toronto, my wife and I visited 11th Avenue; we walked down the street where our cottage had been located but I couldn't identify it with any real certainty, nothing was the same as it had once been. All of the summer cottages had been winterized, trees that once lined the street had been cut down, the beach where we had swum years before was now a park; meanwhile, outside of St. Eustache, a four lane highway cut across what had been forested or agricultural land; suburbia had taken over, big box stores proliferated, and "progress" had won over nostalgia and the happy times we had in our St. Eustache summer holidays.

Then we drove along the Oka Road to the town of Oka. It had once seemed such a long distance between St. Eustache and Oka, but now that same distance could be covered in about fifteen or twenty minutes, it had never been as far as I had thought. A large brick building just off the road that had once housed a congregation of nuns was in darkness, an example of how Quebec's old religiosity has disappeared. Maybe this is where the daughter of friends of my parents, the Francoeurs, had become a nun; her parents were opposed to their daughter's choice of vocation; it was a religious order in which the sisters were silent most of the time, she couldn't even speak to her parents. Mr. Francoeur was the contractor who built my parents' summer cottage.

The quarry where we went swimming around 1961 was still there. I remember at the time thinking, for some reason, that I didn't want Grandma to go with us, that it be only my mother, Auntie Ivy, my brother and I, but I'm glad she came and it was only right that she did come. By 2007 the old Trappist monastery had been closed, that was the place where I had been told as a child that the monks dug their own graves; but now the few remaining monks had become geriatric and lived in retirement homes far away. We drove down the entrance and the place was deserted, it was evening and no one was there. A few years ago I asked a former nun if it was true that the Trappist monks dug their own graves, and she replied that it was; imagine that! This monastery is also where Oka cheese had been originally made by the monks, the cheese became famous and it was now owned by a large dairy conglomerate. In fact, visiting there again, that winter day, was quite upsetting and disturbing, you can't return to the scene of one's happy and innocent childhood and expect anything to be the same, the old is lost under the relentless drive for change. My cousin, Bob Morrissey, told me that he, too, had returned to St. Eustache in

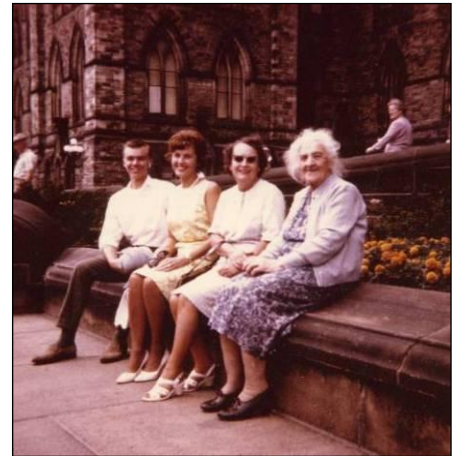
recent years with his mother, my Auntie Dorothy, and he, too, had disliked the changes that he saw there. My advice is to never return to the place of one's nostalgic childhood.

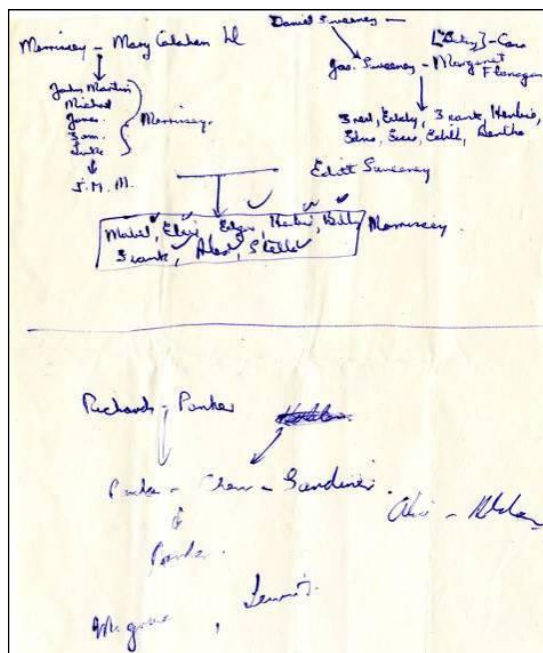
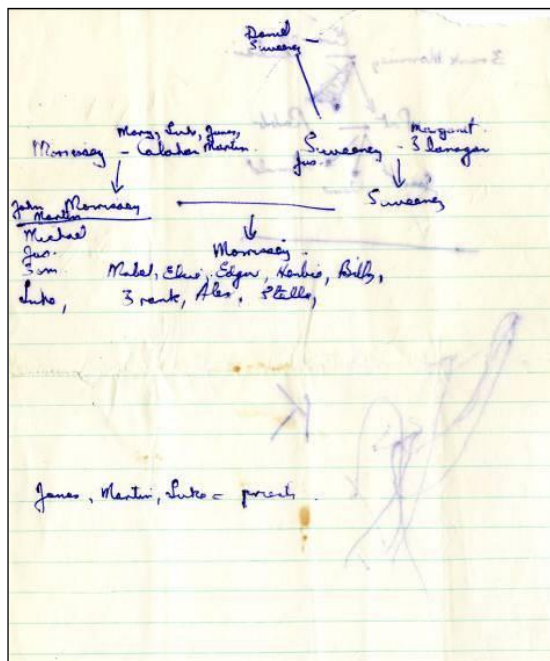
UNCLE ALEX AND AUNTIE IVY

Of all of my father's brothers, we spent the most time with Alex and Ivy. Their son, Herb, was their only child. Herb Morrissey was an incredible magician and successful businessman who founded "Morrissey Magic" in Montreal and then, in 1978, relocated the business to Toronto; it closed in August 2013, ten years after Herb's death. **On right, upper: Hilda Parker Morrissey, Ivy Lew Morrissey, and Edith Sweeney Morrissey, at Parliament Buildings in Ottawa, around 1962; lower: my brother John Morrissey, my mother, Hilda, Auntie Ivy, and my grandmother Edith Morrissey.**

In the early 1980s I visited Herb's magic store in Toronto, Herb was behind the counter; I noticed how similar his voice was to his father's. Herb's wife, Shirley Howe Morrissey, originally from Prince Edward Island, lived with us in 1959 on Oxford Avenue for about a year before marrying Herb. Shirley remained a dear friend of my mother's up to my mother's passing. I remember Shirley's brothers at our home getting dressed for Herb and Shirley's wedding that took place at the United Church in the Town of Mount Royal. When Shirley gave birth to Danny, their second child, Herb visited with us—we now lived at 4350 Montclair Avenue across the street from the Catherine Booth Hospital where Shirley gave birth to both of her children—and Herb performed card tricks in our living room. He was a highly intelligent, talented and exceptional person; he died after a long illness and a courageous struggle to stay alive. I wish I had known Herb better; however, I doubt that he would have found me half as interesting as I found him!

I remember the evening in 1960 when Herb and Shirley's first child, Kim, was born. It was a cool and dark August evening as I walked across the street and then into Edith and Alex's cottage. Now other memories of that time return to me. To the left of the path to the cottage was a swing and I remember Alex and a local CBC television sports commentator sitting together and talking on the front lawn one afternoon (was his name "Charlie Gursky"?). Another time, when Alex parked his brand new car on the lawn of the cottage he didn't expect someone to steal the battery from the car where it was parked—in fact it was parked where it shouldn't have been robbed—but the battery was stolen. One evening, behind the cottage, someone held onto me as I struggled while Herbie put lighter fluid on my leg; Herb said I could be the "youngest fire eater in Quebec", he lit the fluid with a match while I struggled to escape. It was actually harmless fun and a happy memory! When Herb's magic business was just getting off the ground his mother, my Auntie Ivy, would crochet articles that he sold. Herb had little sheets of paper, "flash paper", that ignited on fire if they came into contact with heat, I had some of these and they were lots of fun, but the RCMP visited him at his store and he had to stop selling them; bookies would write on these papers and if raided by the police they could easily destroy evidence of what they were





doing. One evening we all watched a show on French television, on Channel 10, there was Herb doing some magic tricks; the host, Lise Paquette, later became a well-known separatist politician.

Herb's last three years were a time of serious illness including a heart transplant and cancer. On a lighter note, if possible, when Herb was in hospital in Toronto his eye glasses were misplaced and Shirley went to the laundry room and rummaged through many bags of laundry before finally finding them.

The next generation of Edith's grandchildren are my brother, John, me, and Uncle Herb and Auntie Dorothy's two children, Bob and Linda, both born in the early 1940s. After we moved from Oxford Avenue we lost contact with Uncle Herb and Auntie Dorothy, although we did hear some of their news from Shirley. My cousin Bob Morrissey was a sports reporter for the Montreal *Gazette* and then a copy editor for the paper, he has three sons, David (deceased), Jim, and Dan, and two granddaughters. Bob's sister Linda worked for many years teaching at a West Island high school; she has three daughters, Kimberley, Marnie, and Donna, and several grandchildren. A few years ago I read an article in the *Gazette* about the majorettes, in the late 1950s, for the Montreal *Alouettes* CFL football team; a group photo included Linda with some of the other girls that became friends from the *Alouettes*' days. My wife and I had supper with Bob and Linda, Bob's two sons Jim and Dan, Dan's wife and daughter Oona, and one of Linda's daughters and her daughter. That was our first reunion since Grandma's funeral in 1965. What lovely people I thought at the time, and I regretted that we never kept in touch. But as with everything else, life intervenes. On left: John Morrissey's original family

history notes, from around 1960, on this and the next page.

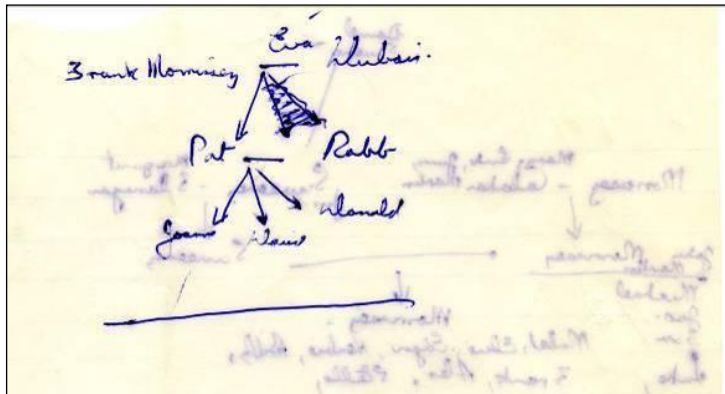
I think the last family get-together that I attended at the Girouard flat was Christmas, around 1964. I remember being there and taking a group photograph—a slide taken with my Kodak Instamatic camera, the slide now regrettably lost—of Edith and Essie, Herb and Dorothy, my mother and brother, all standing near the hall to the rear of the flat. There may have been others present that Christmas but I don't remember who. I remember that the turkey was not fully cooked and had to be returned to the oven.

My brother writes that Christmas at Girouard "was a big deal for (him). The whole family came. Grandma made a really good vanilla sauce dripped on to Christmas cake." My cousin, Bob

Morrissey, remembers his sister Linda and Uncle Alex and Auntie Ivy's son, Herbie, at Christmas at our grandmother's, he writes, "I remember Herbie's smile: It was happy and wicked at the same time. Linda and I used to see it often at Grandma's at Christmas when he'd chase us down the hall, threatening to make us disappear. And we believed he could—hell, if he could make a card or coin disappear, why not us? It's just a matter of volume."

In 1967 we had New Years at Alex and Ivy's apartment in the Town of Mount Royal. I remember having my first drink, perhaps a rum and coke (Alex first asked my mother for her approval) and I was sitting on the couch near Ivy's sister, Doris, who had had a few drinks herself. Someone had received as a present, a lighter that played music (like a music box), this lighter played a tune when ignited. Doris held the lighter to her ear—the better to listen to the lovely music—and pressed the lighter so the music would begin, and briefly set her hair on fire. I can still see her quickly putting out the small "problem" when it happened. Alex collected stamps and eventually sold his collection, he kept the boxes of stamps and stamp albums under his bed and showed them to us that evening. My mother also collected stamps from when she was

young; stamp collecting was a passion for many people back then.



JOHN MORRISSEY'S ORIGINAL FAMILY HISTORY NOTES

My brother and I have always been interested in our family's history, an interest that developed independently in both of us. From age

fourteen I kept a diary and some information in this history of Girouard Avenue is from notes kept in the diary, written at the time these events occurred.

After I began my own family history research in January 1998 (a few weeks after the passing of Uncle Herb and after the ice storm that January), John sent me several large manila envelopes containing his own research. In fact, he had already researched the family's history in Newcastle, NB, but it was only after I had made the same discovery that I read, more closely, his research, including letters, that showed I had duplicated what he had already done. It's a bit silly, but I seem to have had to reinvent the proverbial wheel.

John's research began in the early 1960s when he sat down with our grandmother and made diagrams of how people were related and their names. These scraps of paper, in John's handwriting, record how our grandmother remembered names of family members and their relationship to each other.

GIROUARD IN THE LATE '50S, EARLY '60S

It's strange how some things stick in one's memory, for instance the red carton of six bottles of Coca Cola on the floor just to the left as you entered the spare room off the kitchen, the room where James Sweeney, Edith's father, slept when he lived at the Girouard flat in the 1930s. This was an abstemious home after Martin died in February 1932; indeed, I don't remember any alcohol at Girouard; at our home on Oxford Avenue and then Montclair Avenue there were a few

very old bottles of some kind of spirits in a sideboard in the dining room but I can't remember anyone having a drink. I think my brother and I had an unspoken but subliminal knowledge that drinking can lead to bad things; I doubt either of us consciously associated this with the example of our grandfather Martin, Uncle Frank, young Bill, or the others in the family who suffered by excessive drinking, but we knew the possible consequences of alcohol.

My brother recalls that even in the early 1950s "refrigeration was still done by the daily delivery of a large block of ice by the 'ice man' using a big pair of tongs. I think 2226 Girouard had an electric refrigerator by about 1952 or 1953." I remember the old ice box at St. Eustache, relegated to the back room of the cottage when it became obsolete. Before refrigeration Auntie Essie used to keep ground beef and milk on the window ledge in the winter and sometimes this food had gone bad by the time she would cook it. When Edith's fridge broke down around 1962, my mother gave her the fridge that was in our Montclair home when we moved there.

In the early 1960s, Edith's sister Edna lost her husband Bert Taylor. Edna was born in 1892, the youngest of James and Margaret's children. Bert Taylor was a draftsman who worked in the east end of the city. Edna and Bert had one child, a son whose name was Howard, and they lived in lower Westmount for a number of years, possibly on York Street near the Westmount train station; later they lived in an upper flat on Rosedale Avenue just above Somerled in N.D.G., a few blocks from our home on Montclair Avenue. I'm not too sure if Edith's sister Clara ever lived at the Girouard flat (I think she did), if so she probably shared Essie's room with her, and later Great Aunt Edna shared a bedroom with Great Aunt Essie at 2226 Girouard Avenue. As I said, Edna's son moved her to a retirement home near Ottawa when the Girouard flat was given up after Essie's death. Great Aunt Edna died there on 23 January 1970 and she is buried in the Sweeney/Flanagan family plot at Mount Royal Cemetery.

People love to gossip, especially about money, and there was some talk about how much money Essie must have saved since she never spent money on anything. The fact is, she never spent money because she never had much money! She was frugal by necessity, she paid \$15.00 a month in rent to her sister Edith, and when Essie died Auntie Dorothy found about \$100.00 in Essie's purse in different denominations, but no hidden fortune. I remember Essie giving me a dime, 10¢, at a time when other relatives gave children a quarter, 25¢. When someone gave me any money I would spend it on the way to our home on Oxford Avenue at Tom's Corner Store on Monkland Avenue, next door to Dolbel's Texaco gas station on the corner of Oxford and Monkland, on candy or on little metal trains and interlocking grey tracks made in England. I also remember sitting beside my mother when we stopped at Dolbel's and my mother would tell Mr. Dolbel that she wanted \$2.00 of gas, that would last all week.

Edith's Final Months

Here are the events of the final months of my grandmother's life as I recorded them at the time: Beginning in late February 1965 she had a bad cold. As well, one day at that time Essie had fallen on the floor at 8:30 a.m. and it wasn't until 3:30 p.m. before Uncle Alex could get there to help get her up.

By 5 March 1965 Edith had been admitted to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital on Northcliffe Avenue a few blocks east of Girouard; this is a half a block south of Trinity Memorial Anglican Church where my parents were married in 1940; further up Northcliffe, above NDG Avenue, at 4300 Northcliffe, is where I lived with my first wife in 1976 to 1979.

We visited Edith at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, her hands were bruised and I remember her lying in her hospital bed on that visit—it would be the last time I saw her alive—in a room close to the nurse's station at the hospital. Later, on that same day, we went with Alex to visit Essie and Edna at Girouard Avenue. Edna was very thin, she was not eating, and Essie was bent over. Edith returned home from hospital but was later readmitted.

Let me add here Bob Morrissey's memory of that time; he writes, "I seem to remember Grandma trying to fight her pneumonia on Girouard, but I don't recall how soon that was before her final hospitalization. She was bedridden at the time and—at her doctor's urging—my father and I would frequently go over to try to get her up and about. The best we could do was get her to sit at the side of her bed. Then the tears would flow." About her final days, he adds "I went to visit her at the old Queen Elizabeth Hospital just before she died. I never got to see her because when I got to her room, the nurses had the curtain drawn around her and were administering to her. I waited 20 minutes and then continued on my way to *The Gazette*. I think she died that night or the next day, and I sometimes wonder if she knew I had been to visit."

Edith Sweeney Morrissey died at 8:15 a.m. on Friday, 23 April 1965; she died pneumonia at age 89 years old. We learned of this news because Auntie Ivy phoned us a few hours after Edith had passed away; she said that Edith "would have been 90 next month."

The funeral was held at St. Augustine's Church at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, 26 April 1965. I remember being at the church that morning and going to Cote des Neiges cemetery in a black limousine with my mother and Auntie Ivy, apparently the limousine was available to us because it was not being used by anyone else. After the funeral my mother and I drove to Dorval shopping centre and we ate at Miss Montreal Restaurant, the meal cost \$1.98. She bought a skateboard, a present for my fifteenth birthday, which was the next day.

At Christmas in 1965, just eight months after Grandma's death, my brother and I walked from our home on Montclair Avenue to visit our great aunts, Essie and Edna. Was it during that visit that Auntie Edna spoke of Edith and Martin's wedding, of Edith's beautiful wedding dress? Edith was Presbyterian but part of the condition of marrying Martin, a Roman Catholic, was to raise her children as Catholics. This "sort of" happened as many Sunday mornings Edith preferred to let her children sleep in, they "needed their sleep" she would say. It must have been at this visit that Edna mention Martin's nickname, "Banty", and that one of his favourite expressions was "Let's not be sober."

During that time we visited Alex in a hospital, he had suffered a heart attack. A few days later, on 28 or 31 December 1965, my brother and I paid a second visit to Essie and Edna at Girouard; Essie was going blind; Edna had a cold. That was also the visit when Edna was very upset because Auntie Dorothy, who did so much for them, was away visiting her daughter Linda in the United States; Dorothy was now the main care giver to the two old aunts. We brought them grocery bags of food and they didn't want us to leave. It was very sad.

Was it a year later, on 26 December 1966, that was the next time John and I went to see Edna and Essie at Girouard? At Christmas 1967 we visited Uncle Alex and Auntie Ivy's home in the Town of Mount Royal. Ivy's sisters, Doris (Clifford Wiltshire), Rosie (Freddy Pike), Herb and Shirley and their children Danny and Kim were all present. Alex said that when my father and Herbie were children they had scarlet fever and Edith (and I guess "Banty") lived with the two boys for three months, alone, while Alex lived with his maternal grandparents.

Growing old is not for the weak. With my grandmother's passing an era had ended for our family. She held the family together with her love and hospitality and, when she grew old, she held us together with her presence. Now there was no one to give the family cohesion and as the aunts and uncles were also growing old what we once had began to disappear.

A VISIT WITH UNCLE ALEX IN 1968

We visited my uncle Alex Morrissey on 24 May 1968 when he was in Hôpital-Notre-Dame-de-la-Merci hospital (on Gouin Boulevard) in Ville St. Laurent. At that time Alex reminisced about when he was young, when he stayed with his mother's parents when my father and his brother Herb had rheumatic fever. Since his brothers were quarantined Alex had to stay with his maternal grandparents, James Sweeney and Margaret Flanagan. One Friday evening Alex's grandfather wouldn't let him go out so he snuck outside and went home, he tapped on the window and told his mother what had happened. She said to do as her father told him to do and she would deal with her father later. She did. She called her father a "bugger" and told him off; unfortunately, the result of that incident is that Alex now felt that his maternal grandfather didn't like him.

After school Alex used to go to see his maternal grandparents, especially his grandmother. He used to be given crusty bread with sugar on it. He'd sit in the parlour and whistle for her. He said the whistling was most likely not very good but she would say, "Oh Alex, you're such a good whistler, you're such a good boy to come and whistle for me, what do you call your whistling?" Alex said that he had to think fast and then he said "Shawinigan" or some other name. This is my favourite anecdote from the past and it must have been a fond memory for Alex to recall it all these years later.

His mother's father, Alex said, always had every hair in place and was dressed impeccably. They lived near St. Antoine Street not far from Edith's home. Sometime after her mother died Edith's father lived with her on Girouard, that would be around the mid-1930s.

Alex said that Edgar always loved to study and to go to school but had to stop his studies before completing grade eight or nine of high school; like many young people at that time he had to contribute to help support his family. Edgar had blue eyes and Edith called him "Buttons" and "Blue Eyes" because of this. He had fair red hair, almost blonde; I remember his red hair. Alex's brother Frank was also very intelligent and Alex said that Frank and Edgar were the smartest in the family. He said that Edgar was a quiet man, liked by everyone, and always well dressed. Alex said how much he and his brothers loved their mother. The boys phoned her on Sundays and often visited her. The sons all looked out for their mother's well-being.

Meanwhile, Alex was a "terror" on a bicycle. When Alex was around twelve years old he would ride his bicycle along St. Antoine Street and right up the stairs to the front door of their home. Montreal is famous for its steep outdoor staircases, they can still be seen in many parts of the city, and it is to these that he is referring.

Uncle Alex used to comment (or was it only once but it stayed in my memory?) that someone was as "big as a Beaubien bus" and I always thought this was some idiomatic saying that everyone used in the past, perhaps it was a type of bus that was particularly large. I later learned that it may have been a phrase particular to Alex on that one occasion. Buses were introduced to the transit system in Montreal in the 1930s and Beaubien Street was one of the first major arteries to have large trolley-bus service, the buses were purchased in the United Kingdom; coincidentally, Alex and Ivy lived, at this time, near Beaubien Street and my uncle's phrase "big as a Beaubien bus" must have come from what he observed. What children "hear" and what adults "mean" are sometimes quite distant. Alex and Ivy's home on Beaubien was in the Mile End area of Montreal.

COMING TO THE END

It may have been in May 1965 that my mother joined Ivy and a woman's group from the Town of Mount Royal that Ivy belonged to on a trip to New York City to see the World's Fair. I have photographs of them sitting together at Rockefeller Square, both were smiling and having a good time. Just two weeks after the trip to New York City, still in May 1965, Alex and Ivy, Herb and Shirley and Kim came to our house on Montclair Avenue, their son Danny was born around this time. The next month, June 1965, Herb had visited us and left doves that were a part of his magic show in our powder room.

On 9 August 1967 my mother and I drove to St. Eustache to visit with Alex and Ivy; Alex was recovering from his recent illness. We missed seeing Herbie and Shirley by a few minutes; we visited "Jeds", a corner store we used to go to that was located near the train station, and it seemed the same as it used to be—lots of candy and worn hard wood floors—of course, everything was older and more run down.

In September 1968 my brother moved to Cambridge to attend the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He had completed his Bachelor of Engineering degree at McGill the previous spring. We often drove down to Boston to visit him; one year I took the bus and stopped in Lowell, the home town of the famous American author Jack Kerouac. I stayed at the M.I.T. student residence where we watched Tiny Tim get married on Johnny Carson's *The Tonight Show* on television.

During these years, from 1966 to 1969, we were also visiting my stepfather, Graham Nichols, who was very ill and in and out of several hospital, a convalescent home, and sent home for a period of time but it was beyond my mother's ability to look after him by herself. My mother visited Graham in hospital almost daily until her health began to deteriorate by this impossible schedule; I was usually present with her on these hospital visits. She eventually took a part-time job at the library at Sir George Williams University as a diversion from everyday life; this was a positive move for her as it relieved some of the stress she was under, she made new friends, and it eventually became a full-time job from which she retired in the late 1970s. The years with Graham in hospital, just ten years after my father's death, were a lot harder on all of us than I can communicate here. If you don't live through such an experience you really have no idea what it is like. His illness was tragic and he never recovered or had a "normal" life after 1966. His illness literally destroyed him. Graham Nichols died in late October 1969 in his sixtieth year.

When Uncle Alex was in his early 60s he changed jobs, perhaps looking forward to a higher salary or perhaps his old employment came to an end and he needed to bring in a salary. He had been a salesman for Stowell Screw but he also did some accounting work; unfortunately, he soon found that his new job was beyond his ability and he regretted that he had changed jobs. On 16 May 1968 we were told that Alex suffered a heart attack the previous Tuesday night. He also suffered from emphysema from his many years of smoking cigarettes. I remember visiting him at a hospital, as I have discussed above. It's a small thing but I remember that one of the things Alex said during our visit with him is that while nuns make compassionate nurses but they aren't very good at nursing, one had broken a needle in him when she attempted to give him an injection.

Due to his emphysema, Alex and Ivy had to move from the apartment where they had lived for many years; they needed an apartment on a first floor instead of one that required climbing stairs. On 23 October 1968 Ivy phoned my mother; she asked if she would make

kitchen curtains for her and if she had any old clothes she didn't need. Alex had a job at that point but it wasn't paying as much as his old job. When my mother visited Alex and Ivy at their new apartment—she had made the kitchen curtains for them—she found that Ivy was very unhappy, money was scarce; it must have been frightening to be in such a situation at an age when things should have been getting better. Things were getting worse. I don't think Ivy was emotionally able to deal with the changes they were experiencing. I think she resented that Alex had become ill and that life had become so hard to endure. When we were leaving, Alex said to Ivy, "shouldn't you pay Hilda for the curtains", but my mother replied that this wasn't necessary.

Only a few weeks later Shirley phoned my mother, we were told by Shirley that Alex had died that morning, November 21, 1968; that was the same day as my father's funeral in 1956, only twelve years before. Alex's funeral was on 23 November 1968.

What followed were very dark days for Auntie Ivy. We visited her at her home on 10 December 1968 and she was devastated by Alex's passing. She regretted some of the things she had said about Alex while he was sick, things said in the despair and anguish of the moment. She decided that because of finances she would move to the cottage in St. Eustache, living in the Town of Mount Royal was too expensive. It was the following summer that she moved to the now winterized cottage in St. Eustache where she had spent so many happy summers; we visited her there on Wednesday, 20 August 1969. I remember this visit. Ivy also did not look well; she was bitter about life, about losing Alex, and she had little money, there was no insurance money because Alex had changed jobs—a new job that caused him a lot of stress—a job that possibly contributed, in part, to his death. Later that day we drove to Oka, as we had done the previous summer when Alex was still alive. We bought freshly-baked bread and visited a boutique that we had also visited the previous year.

We had a phone call from Shirley on 11 March 1971. Ivy was in the Montreal General Hospital and had cancer; she had not been informed of the diagnosis and she was not expected to survive the month. We visited her the next day. When we arrived Ivy was just coming out of the bathroom and I remember her appearance, she was very thin and jaundiced. When she greeted us she said, "I look like one of those African people" referring to a current famine in Africa. The doctors were amazed that she didn't complain about being in pain. As we left, my mother said to Ivy, "There's only you, me, and Billy." And then Ivy said how she felt, "Oh, the whole pile of crap called life." She'd been through too much over the previous three or four years.

I don't know that Ivy was ever told that she had cancer but she must have known that something was seriously wrong. Far from passing away before the month ended, she survived another eleven months, until 5 February 1972, when she died in the Montreal General Hospital, she was sixty-four years old. Ivy is buried in the Morrissey family plot at Notre Dame des Neiges Cemetery in Montreal, with Alex, Mabel, Edith, Martin, and other members of our family. The much loved Aunt Lib is buried in an adjoining plot. God bless them all.

MY FINAL VISIT TO 2226 GIROUARD AVENUE

For many years I drove by the Girouard Avenue flat—I was always curious to revisit the place—and one day in May 2009 I noticed that the front door of the flat was open, there was an open house set up by a real estate agent. I rushed home and got my camera. About a half hour later I entered the flat for the first time in forty years. My grandmother's former home had fallen

into a terrible state of disrepair as there had been very little maintenance since the the last members of our family moved out in 1968—the floors were uneven, the door jambs were crooked, the roof had leaked due to the Ice Storm of 1998, and windows frames were rotted.

There was still a familiar smell of dust as I walked up the inside stairs. For the next half hour or so I took photographs of my grandmother's old home. The first room I entered had been my Auntie Mabel's bedroom and this had been my parents' bedroom when we lived at the Girouard flat in the early 1950s. I remember sitting in this room on my father's lap and learning how to spell ("d-o-g ... c-a-t"), maybe I was three years old. I remember looking at cartoons with him that he had cut out from the *Saturday Evening Post* magazine.

Next, to the right of Mabel's bedroom, was the living room where I used to stand at the front window and look out at the street below and one day in 1959 I counted eleven streetcars running along Girouard Avenue, it was the last day streetcars ran in Montreal. When I would stay overnight, I would sleep on the maroon couch against the wall to the left as you entered the living room with the hall light left on. Here, too, was where my brother and I sat, on that same maroon couch covered with white sheets, when we visited our great aunts, at Christmas eight months after our grandmother died in 1965; I thought of our Great Aunt Edna telling us stories of the past, describing our grandparents' wedding over seventy years earlier.

Curiously, during this entire visit, it was as though no time at all had intervened between 1968 when I last visited and this day forty years later in 2009 when I returned for this visit. It was as though I had returned to the past and it was the same as it had always been, almost frozen in time, despite the fact that the flat was now run down and basically empty except for a few pieces of furniture waiting to be moved. One thought I had was how spacious the place was, large rooms, a front and back porch; I could see myself living there quite comfortably if it had not fallen into such a terrible state of disrepair.

Then I continued my tour of the flat. I entered what had been my grandmother's bedroom, I don't remember ever having been in this room before. I remembered visiting her and listening to the radio—it was mid-afternoon and the radio station was CJAD—that was in her bedroom but we could hear it in the living room; we were listening to Art Linkletter's *House Party* show followed by a woman announcer interviewed someone. Grandma's bedroom was off the dining room where a long sideboard was on the right side of the room, the large dining room table was in the center, and a china cabinet at the far end of the dining room to the left of the hallway that lead to the rear of the flat. A tea wagon on which I used to play was in front of a window overlooking the lane behind the flat, it was to the left of the china cabinet. As I walked down the hallway I noticed in the bathroom the old claw foot bathtub that had been there for the last eighty or ninety years. Next to the bathroom was my Great Aunt Essie's bedroom and then, further along the hall, I entered the kitchen with the spare room off the kitchen which was my grandmother's father's bedroom in his final years back.

So many memories returned to me, including Bella, the cleaning lady who came to the flat in the early 1960s; I remembered Bella on her hands and knees, with her nylons rolled down to her ankles, polishing the hardwood floors in the foyer by hand and the smell of floor wax in the air; was it that day that my grandmother received newspapers from her brother in California, packaged by being rolled up and put in the mail?

And now, one last memory of Girouard Avenue returns to me; it is my very first memory and as we conclude this return to Girouard Avenue. I remember lying in my pram on Girouard Avenue, a few doors north, towards Sherbrooke Street, and looking up I saw several women I did not recognize standing around the pram looking down at me. And then I thought the following: "My mother is the most beautiful woman." And she was.

Today, the old flat is completely renovated. All that remains is our memory of the place, the human drama and comedy, the love and sorrow, the happiness and tears. This is where we originated, this is where we lived and the people who helped make us into who and what we are today. When I was a child I thought that "ordinary" people are the real heroes of everyday life, not the generals or politicians, but everyday people, for me this includes my grandmother, my aunts and uncles, my parents, my family. I have loved you all and I am one of you; God bless you all.

Stephen Morrissey
17 August 2015
Montreal, Canada

POSTSCRIPT

In September 1970 I wrote a series of poems about the time, just a few years previous, when we spent our summers in St. Eustache, one of them is "A Quebec Evening":

A QUEBEC EVENING

My grandmother sits in the evening red
sun setting green & yellow painted
porch; my aunt in her bedroom gets dressed;
I enter the little St. Eustache country cottage—
SLAM the screen door bangs against the latch the wood's
rotten enough, it's been a hot summer day
& my grandmother blows a tired old
breath upwards to blow
away a strand of white hair
fallen over her wrinkled forehead.
She's only got a few teeth left
and she smiles I grin back and
go to the back of the house where my Uncle Alex
in undershirt is shaving,
bald head surrounded by a little white hair
his face is covered with soapy lather
he primes the red pump and
I put the extra shaving lather on
my 9 year old face & pretend to shave with
a blunt old yellow handled knife; we both laugh
as he asks me about my non-existent girlfriends
& he tells me about the French Canadian
girl he used to go out with on St. Antoine Street.

—Stephen Morrissey
Poems of a Period, 1971



ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Stephen Morrissey's ninth book of poetry is *A Private Mythology* (Victoria, BC, Ekstasis Editions, 2014). Morrissey is also the author of several poetry chapbooks, essays, and numerous book reviews. Stephen Morrissey is the sixth generation of his family in Canada, his ancestors having arrived here from Ireland in the late 1830s. Stephen Morrissey earned his B.A., Honours English with Distinction, at Concordia University. Morrissey studied with poet and scholar Louis Dudek at McGill University earning his M.A. in English Literature. While at McGill Morrissey was awarded the Peterson Memorial Prize in English Literature. Morrissey's extensive literary papers are archived at McGill's Rare Books and Special Collections in the McLennan Library. The Government of Quebec named an island in northern Quebec after a phrase from one of Morrissey's poems, "la vingt-septieme lettre".

Visit the poet at www.stephenmorrissey.ca.

Author's statement: This memoir is an addendum to my book of poems, *Girouard Avenue* (2009). This is my psychic center, this is where I began in life and where I often return in dreams, poems, and memories.

Poetry Books by Stephen Morrissey:

The Trees of Unknowing, Vehicule Press, Montreal, 1978

Divisions, Coach House Press, Toronto, 1983

Family Album, Caitlin Press, Vancouver, 1989

The Compass, (Book One, The Shadow Trilogy), Empyrean Press, Montreal, 1993

The Yoni Rocks, (Book Two, The Shadow Trilogy), Empyrean Press, Montreal, 1995

The Mystic Beast, (Book Three, The Shadow Trilogy), Empyrean Press, Montreal, 1997

Mapping the Soul, Selected Poems 1978-1998, The Muses' Company, Winnipeg, 1998

Girouard Avenue, Coracle Press, Montreal, 2009

A Private Mythology, Ekstasis Editions, Victoria, 2014

Girouard Avenue



Stephen Morrissey

REMEMBERING GIROUARD AVENUE



This is the history of the Morrissey family of Montreal during their residency at 2226 Girouard Avenue—it includes family history, births and deaths, holidays at the their country cottage, evenings playing cards, the generations of Morrisseys who lived there, and the presence of Edith Sweeney Morrissey for whom the door was always open for any family member who needed a place to live—from the mid-1920s to the late 1960s. Stephen Morrissey writes, "This memoir is an addendum to my book of poems, *Girouard Avenue* (2009). This is my psychic center, this is where I began in life and where I often return in dreams, poems, and memories."